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‘BROKEN STOWAGE’

'BROKEN STOWAGE'

BY

DAVID W. BONE

AUTHOR OF 'THE BRASSBOUNDER'

' . . . More or less, if on board, to be delivered.
Packages to be used as dunnage or wherever
required to assist stowage. Ship not to be re-
sponsible for numbers or condition on delivery.'



DUCKWORTH & CO.

3 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN



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TO
MY SHIPMATES
AND THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN
TO SEA WITH ME

A NUMBER of the following sketches have appeared in *The Manchester Guardian*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *St. James's Gazette*, and other periodicals.

To the Editors and Proprietors the writer is indebted for their courtesy in permitting republication.

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'BROKEN STOWAGE'

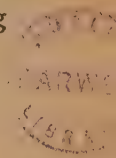
I

SETTING OUT

THERE were three of us in the steerage of the Rotterdam boat. One was a Jew who beetled his brows and asked himself fierce questions in Low German ; the other was a young little Fleming with strong arms and a hard head, who told me he had been a fireman on a ' vickly ' boat. (He explained that a ' vickly ' boat was one on which ' vickly ' wages were paid.) I was going to join my ship at Antwerp—going to sea on my very first voyage.

The regular steamer for Antwerp had had a mishap and would not sail for some days. For me, there could be no going back home after I had set out in my bravery of brass buttons and bold good-byes. So I came on the Rotterdam steamer and trusted to find a train.

We left Leith Docks about midnight—a black bitter midnight, with the wind strong east outside and a big sea rolling up the Firth and shattering



on the pier-heads. I lingered to see the town lights vanish into the mist astern and, feeling ill, went below. How the *Britannia* plunged into it! How sick I was! I lay on my back in a low bunk and tried to court sleep, while the 'vickly' man, in bad English and worse voice, sang, 'Leedle Fischer Maiden.' Several times in the night I got up and tried to get out for a breath of fresh air, but the steamer was driving her head into the long seas, with her foredeck all awash, and there was no shelter from the fury of it. So I returned to the steerage, to find the 'vickly' man still singing the same song, but with different words and a different tune, and the Jew would stare so fiercely at me that I felt sure he had designs on my 23s. 4d. The honest 'vickly' man was a friend. His name was Henrik. He was going to Antwerpen to "shpend de dollars," as he said. I told him I was going there to join a sailing ship. He looked grave, but brightened up when he recollected that he knew a man who had been round the Horn in one of these, and who had come back with enough 'dollars' to start a beerhouse in the Shkipper Strasse—"mit two tables in de shstreet out!"

"We were for Antwerpen then? We would go together. That was all recht, Zoone!"

He showed me his money in the knotted corner of a grimy sweat rag (after looking to see if the Jew was really asleep), and told me he had left his 'vickly'

boat because Mynheer Zecond was a 'shwartzkopf,' whatever that may be.

In daytime the weather was none so bad. The sky had cleared, and the grey sweep of the North Sea was set about with many ships on their voyagings. I had my first view of a sailing ship under canvas on the open sea. We passed quite close. She was the *Templar* of Arendal, and was standing to the southard under small canvas, for the wind had still a heavy gust in it, and the barque's salt-whitened timber deck-load showed that she had lately come through a gale. Already I was learning my business. The sailors of the steamer pointed out the different rigs of the vessels in sight. They seemed to take delight in telling me of all the hardships of life in a wind-jammer, and, when the *Templar* thrashed past, told one another (for my benefit) how glad they were to be in a well-found steamer and not beating out of sight of land aboard a floating workhouse. Henrik was more considerate. He told me what a fine beerhouse his friend had, his friend who had been round the Horn. Still, it was the sea I wanted, and not a life of ease and comfort such as he pictured, and in my low state my thoughts were none of the brightest.

It was Sunday when we arrived at Rotterdam. In early morning we steamed out of the rough of the North Sea and passed between the low banks of

Nieu Maas. It was my first sight of foreign soil. How eagerly I kept lookout, sitting on *Britannia's* fore-capstan ! For all my boasted liking of the sea, how glad I was to see the green pasture-lands, the trim little villages, the endless canal cuttings winding away to the blue of the horizon. Henrik was there to tell and explain : how that was the *Stadhuis* and this the *Loodswezen*, here was good Genever sold, and there Tabak of finest quality. Soon my sitting was suspended. The mate and his men came to clear the ropes for mooring, and over the bows the high warehouses and spires of Rotterdam came at us.

The Antwerp train would not start till three in the afternoon, so the 'vickly' man took me down to sailor-town, the Schiedam Schiedyk, and we spent the time in a land of boarding-houses and zeeman's grog-shops. We had refreshment in a small place. A large signboard informed us that it was the 'Channel for Orders House,' and underneath were the British, American, and Dutch flags suitably entwined. Here we had beer and sausage. I asked for tea, and the 'vickly' man laughed. I could have beer or cocoa or chokolat or schnapps, but—tea ? The buxom proprietress held up her hands and said it was not in Rotterdam !

We sat a while, and were about to go, when the 'vickly' man discovered a musical box that jingled 'Leedle Fischer Maiden' in waltz time whenever

a pennig was put in the slot. Then he sat entranced, and nothing could induce him to leave until it was time to go to the Leith boat for our baggage. Henrik had a small sailor's haversack which he slung over his shoulder, but I had to engage a man to take my sea-chest and bedding to the station. This he did on a long barrow, having two stout dogs harnessed underneath to drag it along.

The Antwerp train was slow ; we stopped at every station on the line, and it was late evening when we arrived at the frontier station of Essen. Here we stopped for a long time, and an official ran along the line of wagons shouting an order in Flamsk and French to "descend you others !" The 'vickly' man shouldered his canvas bag, and I followed him out into a long shed where our fellow-passengers were protesting and arguing to gold-laced officials. Henrik emptied his bag on the counter, and an official, after examining the scant items of apparel, put them together again and motioned that he was satisfied. Then Henrik made for the refreshment place, and I was for following when the man stopped me with a long fast sentence in French. I knew enough French to ask for the pens of your grand-aunt, but this quick work was beyond me, so they sent for an officer who spoke English. He asked me if I had anything to 'declare,' and then I understood. He took me to a bench where stood my sea-chest and bedding,

removed from the luggage-van. The chest was opened and my kit displayed on the bench. There were my gleaming oilskins, my long sea-boots, the sheath knife and belt (that I had buckled on so proudly before admiring brothers), my uniform with brass buttons. All new—brand new—aggressively new.

“Zo. There would be twellef francs feefty of duty to be paid,” they said, sorting them out.

I protested. I was not remaining in Belgium. I was going to a British ship at Antwerp. I had no money (indeed, my railway fare had taken most of my 23s. 4d.). The new clothes were for my use—a seaman’s outfit.

“No matter,” they said, shrugging their shoulders, indifferent, “they are of new. Eet is twellef francs feefty of duty to be paid.”

The crowd in the waiting-room had gone to the train; I could not see Henrik. There were only the group of officials and myself beside the long bench. I counted my money again. I wished I had not spent so much in the Channel for Orders; I wished I had not given the man with the two dogs so much. The officer who spoke English suggested that I should leave my baggage in bond, and get my Herr Captain to send for it when I arrived myself in Antwerpe. This I was about to do, being the only way out, when a stout little man came over and asked questions. He was evidently a superior

officer, for the others fell back and spoke respectfully. ‘*M’sieu le Chef, M’sieu Wilgroot,*’ as they addressed him, was an enormously stout little man with a round pleasant face and little merry eye. He had a voice. A voice that rumbled. A voice from the soles of his boots. He spoke English, and asked me in a kindly way. I explained my case. I was for Antwerp, to join my ship, going on a voyage to San Francisco. I had had no idea that duty would have to be paid, and had not enough money to pay it. The new clothes were my outfit—sailor clothes that one goes to sea with. ‘*M’sieu le Chef*’ fingered my oilskins and dungarees, drew my sheath knife, tried it on his finger nail to see if it was sharp, and motioned to a man to put them all back into the chest. The man who spoke English made some slight demur.

“ But, *M’sieu le Chef, M’sieu Wilgroot*, he is able to pay. It is an officer,” he said, pointing to my brass-buttoned uniform.

“ Ach, no,” said *M’sieu le Chef*. “ You nod onderstand. He is an ‘junge loodsmann.’ It is for de brass button dey goes to de sea, aind’t it ? ”

My chest was put into the luggage-van, and kindly *M’sieu le Chef* came with me to the train, talking and asking questions. He had a way of saying “ No ” after every sentence. Evidently he thought it a turn of speech—a sort of finished colloquialism.

“ You goes to San Fransisk—San Fransisk—no ?

Venn you gomes back again, dot vass long times, no ? ”
... “ *Ein jahr. 'tt.* Dot vass long times, aind't it ? ”

At the train they were shunting a new engine in front. I was looking for Henrik. I passed up the line of carriages, and I heard him. In a carriage, among a crowd of rosy-faced country people, sat my 'vickly' man. He had had beer in the refreshment place—a lot of beer—and was entertaining his fellow-passengers. He was singing at the second line—'Skies mid shtorms vass laiden'—when I passed. Seeing me, he hailed loudly and motioned to a seat that he had held for me ; two smiling countrywomen bunched their many skirts and made room. It was clear that Henrik was already a favourite. I stood for a little, talking to *M'sieu le Chef*. He told me he once wanted to go to the sea, and asked again where I was bound for. . . . “ *Ach, ja.* San Francis—San Francisk—no ? ”

He sighed and lifted his fat left hand, and sighted along the fingers, as if he could see the Golden Gates in the dim distance. The engine gave a preparatory snort. He shook my hand, while I thanked him for his kindness. “ *Ach, ja,*” he said. “ Dot vass all recht, Zoone, you vass to the sea out. . . . *Mein-selluf, Ah vass for de sea once—but no—no.* ”

A bell rang and we moved on.

“ San Francis—San Fransisk,” said *M'sieu le Chef*. “ *tt.* Dat vass long way—no ? ”

II

ERRORS OF JUDGMENT

I

EVERY one on the water-front knew that Day's Nautical Academy was no longer popular with the younger men of the sea-service. Stiff old Captain Day was strong on theory and first principles, and the time had come, they thought, when 'tabloid' navigation was "good enough t' be going on with!" The day of the sailing ship, of long voyages and leisurely preparation for the exams., was gone. Steam and steam-pressure left no time for going to the root of things; no time for such an old-fashioned establishment as Captain Day's. Now, Thorleys'! Ah! That was the place to go to for 'smart' work. No bothersome 'whys' and 'wherefores' there! Just add, and subtract, and do this, and that! Everything up to date! No time lost! To-day—a new scholar biting his pens! . . . To-morrow—a candidate, with his titbits and memory-aids all trimmed and ready! . . . Next week? *Hutt!* Off

to the sea again, with the ink scarce dry on a new certificate ! . . . Thorleys' !

For a time Old Day kept up a brave show of busyness. Never was the big brass plate so splendidly polished, never the little wooden Admiral so fine in spick new paint ! All to no purpose ! Even the boy in the ship-chandler's downstairs could tell you that the 'Academy' was deserted. It was of no use for the Captain to stamp about and move desks and pretend that his scholars took up all his time. Where was the fine smell of ship's tobacco that used to hang about the doorway when the sun-bronzed pupils were 'out' for an interval ? Where the group of anxious youths when the fortnightly exams. were on, the joyous deep-sea hails when the tests were successfully over ?

Ah, yes ! Go up and down the stairs, Captain Day ! Go up and down, humming *The West Wind* as if you had never a care in the world ! Carry your head high and your shoulders squared like the gallant old fellow you are. . . . But you can't 'blind' the ship-chandler's boy who saw you looking out over the harbour yesterday ; and your lips were hard set for whistling, and your head was bowed, and your shoulders were drawn, and you were looking out, . . . looking out !

.
" Twen-ty years ! "

Busy Mr. Rankman whistled softly, turned the letter down, and looked across to the Marine Superintendent. "Whew! Twenty years, eh? A long time t' be away from the sea, Captain! D'you know this man? Day, his name is. Wants a post as an officer in the Line."

"Oh yes!" answered the Superintendent. "Know him? Yes! Served under him years before . . . before . . . before he came ashore. A sound man, sir, but unfortunate . . . very unfortunate. That affair of the *Centurion*——"

"Ah! The *Centurion*, eh?" The Director's usually genial face clouded over, his lips assumed hard lines. Shipowners have long memories. "*Centurion*, eh? Lives lost there, weren't there? A bad business, if I remember."

"Well! . . . always held that Day was harshly treated by the Court, sir, over that. If it happened to-day, they wouldn't break a man for an 'error of judgment.' We know now that there are such things as wayward sea-currents. True, fifty lost—but that was by the Dago emigrants rushing the boats. All who stood to Day's orders came through, and even the Court that broke him commended his gallantry and resource. A sound man, sir! Sound, but unfortunate!"

"Umm-m! You seem pretty warm about him, Captain. Friend o' yours?"

" Well, yes ! A friend, if you put it so. And a friend of well-nigh every shipmaster in the port. Quite half of our men have been through his hands, one time or another, in that twenty years since . . . since th' *Centurion*. Day's Nautical Academy had a fine reputation in its day. I'm afraid he's not doing much lately. The young men these days have no time for serious work. They say, too, that he has lost money in that Burton Docks Company. I didn't ask him . . . a proud old fellow, sir."

" Aye, aye ! But twenty years, Captain ! Dammit, a man can't know much about seafaring after that lapse of time ! "

" That's so ! So ! But Day has been in close touch——"

" Tutt ! Tutt ! Well, give 'm a junior berth if you've got one. He can't do much harm there. . . . Now, about the *Khandahar*. We want——"

The busy Director waved Old Day and his affairs aside, and turned to more important matters.

So it fell out that John Day came back to the sea again, and found himself (in the brightest of brass buttons) superintending the stowage of passengers' baggage in the hold of the *Khandalla* of the Anglo-Indian Line.

Things went well. Captain Barratt was an old acquaintance, and the other officers (taking cue from their Commander) treated the old gentleman with a

deal of consideration and respect. For a while the work and routine were strangely new to him. Affairs had greatly changed at sea in twenty years. Seaman-ship was now steamanship . . . all was hurry, bustle. The exactions of keen competition in shipping left no time for the fine touches of a seaman's art. Quickly done was well done, no matter how lubberly or insecure. High-pressure steam appliances had made any despatch possible ; it was a case of ' in tide and out tide,' home and off again—a ceaseless round !

Twenty years of putting other people right is ill training for a junior berth in the sea-service ! Day found it hard to curb his schoolmasterly habits ; to act the part of foreman-stevedore with proper humility ; to sit mumchance at table while passengers idly speculated on the history of this strange Chota Sahib, who looked as if he ought to be Captain—by every hair of his trim white beard. Often he heard the whisper as he passed on : “ . . . The *Centurion*, you know ! . . . A bad business ! ”

It was everywhere, that grim spectre of the *Centurion*. Ashore it had been forgotten in the round of work ; here in a little world of shipboard the whole grim story was recalled and told again. The passengers talked of it. His brother officers (while avoiding all reference and approach) had a maddening note of pity in their tone. Once, when

passing Cape Trafalgar, a quartermaster asked him, civil like : " Beggin' yer par'n, Mr. Day, sir. Me an' Bill wos 'avin' a hargyment. . . . Warn't it some-w'eres 'bout 'ere as th' *Centurion* wos lorst ? "

Still, it was a fine quiet life for the old man. The never-changing sea was there, and with every breath of the clean fresh breeze Old Day felt his spirits rise (the old spirit that was before the days of the *Centurion* and schoolroom drudgery), and carried his head high and his shoulders squared.

On his second voyage luck came his way—the strange 'luck' at sea that is so often built upon the misfortunes of others. The Second Officer was left in a Bombay hospital, and his juniors made a step in promotion. The next voyage, Day was raised to Second through a kindly hint of his friendly Commander. This—for the Anglo-Indian—was rapid progress, and the quayside prophets (in the negative manner of the very wise) " shouldn't wondered if Ol' Day didn't get a command again, sixty an' all as he is ! "

But, all too soon, a change came over his affairs. Captain Barratt was transferred to a new ship, and with him went Old Day's reviving prospects. The new Captain was of a different type. A comparatively young man for command, he had influence with the Directors, and was being pushed rapidly on. He had not passed through the long years of pro-

bation that engender a tolerance for seeming fault in others. A capable seaman and Commander, energetic, exacting to a degree of harshness, he had pushed on with never a check. Failure he knew nothing of ; insidious doubt had never plucked at his coat-sleeve in a moment of difficulty. ' Lucky ' London was his nickname on the quay. ' Lucky ' indeed—in that he had never been tried !

To such a man Old Day, with his history of failure, could appear as nothing but a useless ' old-timer.' London, in his hurried way, never courted a second impression. It was enough for him that here was a man who had been ' in trouble,' a ' has-been ' . . . who had fallen behind in the race. The old gentleman's slow, deliberate ways and scholarly turn of speech irritated the impetuous young Commander to a point of exasperation. Trifles become momentous when seen through passioned eyes ; everything that fell to the Second Officer was judged to be wrongly done. Now it was a sneer at ' school-book ' navigation ; again, a coarse reflection on a point of seamanship. Nothing was left undone to make the old man's position intolerable, and by the time the *Khandalla* was homeward bound, even the man at the wheel knew that " Ol' Day wos goin' t' get th' sack " as soon as they arrived home.

II

A bitter night in the Channel, and the *Khandalla*, homeward bound, hammering down the crest and trough of a heavy sea—driving through the thick weather that attends a sou'west gale.

Day and a junior were on watch : tramping restlessly a yard or two, peering beetle-browed into the murk ahead, striving to pierce that pall of thin rain and driving sleet that lashed, in flurry and burst, down the wind. At intervals the steamer's syren sounded out. The dim light in the bridge 'telegraph' showed 'STAND BY' on the dial, but throb and thrust of the powerful engines below told that speed was up.

Captain London was racing up Channel to catch a daylight tide at Liverpool. He had signalled from Gibraltar that he would dock on Saturday's morning tide ; come wind or mist or aught else, Saturday's morning tide it must be, or he felt that he would be reduced to the level of the other Captains of the Line, who allowed the weather to interfere with their arrangements. With the mist deepening, and no gleam of the coast lights in sight, Day had called the Captain and suggested a 'slowing down.'

" . . . Must be getting up to the Smalls, sir, and a lot of craft around ! " To London the suggestion appeared in the light of an added reason why he

should carry on, and he returned as answer a sneering reflection, vainly confident. "Just let me know if ye're afraid, mister, and I'll keep the watch myself."

"I can keep the watch, sir," answered Day, "... if that were all. But it's on your responsibility. Left to myself, I'd slow down immediately and haul out to the west'ard."

"Aye, aye! No doubt you would, no doubt. You did that in the *Centurion*, didn't you? I'll stand the responsibility all right. And I'll make myself responsible for a new Second Mate on my next trip!... Hell! When are you going to understand that your business is to take your orders and leave the navigation of the ship to me?"

"Sorry, sir," said Day. "Thought it my duty to——"

"Duty? Your only duty is to obey orders!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" Day moved over to the lee side of the bridge, and the Captain, donning an oil-skin, stationed himself to windward.

London was no 'figurehead.' Fishers' lights leapt out of the murk ahead, perilously close. At the first sudden glimmer there would come a steady-voiced order to the steersman—the word that meant all the difference between safety and disaster. Once some one shouted from the deck of a fleeting trawler as the *Khandalla* whipped across her sternwash. The words were lost in the shrilling of the wind, but

the hoarse roar of the fisherman caused even London a moment of anxiety.

" Lay aft, mister, and get a cast of the lead," he shouted to Day, ringing for half-speed with a gesture of savage impatience. Slowly the pulse of the big vessel was eased to his orders. He cursed the blustering wind and crashing seas that must, he thought, be deadening the sound of the Smalls signal-gun. Listen as he might, nothing could be heard above the shriek of the gale. . . . Day, returning, reported ' forty-five ' and sandy bottom, and London went below to his charts.

Soon he came up again, and ordered ' full speed '—steering more to the north.

Had Day seen the chart he would have known. The long years of drilling a reduction of soundings into backward candidates would have stood him in stead—would have shown him that the Captain (with lofty disregard of ' school-book ' navigation) had omitted to correct the ' cast ' for rise of tide—that the *Khandalla*, under full steam, was possibly heading for the foul ground eastward of the Smalls. But he was ' keeping his watch ! '—' taking orders '—and the *Khandalla* with her freight of precious lives sped on her fatal course into the murk and gloom of a blinding sou'west gale.

At three-mile intervals the soundings were noted. ' Forty-two,' ' thirty-nine '—fatal confirmation of a

line of errors ; the uncorrected depths tallied with a safe and proper course !

Hearing nothing of the signal-gun, London at length slowed down and ordered Day to the lead again. It was darker and thicker than ever. A shrieking squall of snow and sleet had closed down, and nothing could be seen beyond a ship's length. As Day went aft to the sounding machine he noticed how white and broken the sea appeared. Soon he knew the cause !

He heard the steering-gear creak to a sudden vicious strain—a white line of foaming breakers leapt from the gloom ahead—and the *Khandalla* launched her mighty hull upon the rocks. With every tortured plate of her ringing to the first terrific blow, she climbed—higher—higher—till, with a heavy sickening lurch to starboard, she stopped—hard—fast !

Captain London would not now dock on Saturday's morning tide. From the swaying motion of her stern, Day knew that the *Khandalla* would never dock again.

Quickly he called his few terror-stricken lascars together and staggered to the bridge. There the Captain stood with folded arms—staring stonily ahead. The glare from dial and binnacle shone on the glistening oilskins—rigid pose—expressionless face. At the wheel the steersman gripped the

spokes, as if the ship still stood ready to the helm. The white-faced junior stood apart, staring at the stricken Captain. The engine pointer stood at 'FULL ASTERN.' Quickly Day jumped to the handle and rang 'STOP.' London made a sudden move as if to prevent him, then, with an impassioned gesture of the hands, stood still again.

So! . . . Would he do nothing? Could nothing be done? Day grasped his arm. "Come, sir! Come!"

"Aye, aye!" Slowly recovering, London pulled himself together. . . . Quite suddenly he began to give orders. "Send Mate to me, quick. . . . Bolt—the magazine—distress rockets. . . . Day, get hands together, starboard boats—for Christ's sake——"

"No! No! Hold to th' ship, sir," cried Day. "My God, boats! Boats in a sea and tide like that——"

"Starboard boats, quick." The old, blustering arrogant—the man whom shock had rendered speechless—was no longer there. In his stead—a determined man, speaking with quiet deadliness of purpose that silenced all dissent. "God! The boats, Day! The boats!"

Day swung off the bridge.

On deck was chaos indescribable. Hurtling seas breaking over the doomed ship, lashing down to leeward in spurt and spume; passengers in night

attire crowding the gangways, panic-stricken, a light of terror in their eyes—seeking—questioning—a babel of cries, oaths, prayers; grimy lascars firemen rushing up from stokehold and below, shouting “Allah! Allah!” Steam under high pressure blowing off—a deep, affrighting roar—adding, with the hiss and thunder of screaming rockets, a terror of sound to the elements of disaster.

Slowly, from out the dim and disorder, a set purpose began to show. Day had got some of the crew together—the white men and a few lascars recovered from the first benumbing shock—and the work of clearing the boats was going forward. Driving, pushing, coaxing, they got the crowd penned into the saloon-house and stairway, and, free to work, began to swing the heavy boats out.

Two out, and straining every nerve at the third, Day saw nothing of a huge sea running up. Out of the mist and darkness, with the sweep of leagues of open sea behind it, a monster wave struck the *Khandalla* full shock on the broadside and crashed aboard with resistless force. The stricken hull shuddered to the mighty blow, a hurtling column of broken water shot up mast-high. Day and his crew were dashed to the deck; two were swept overboard with scarce a cry.

Swiftly as it had come up, the torrent of water

passed on. Dazed and bloody, Day staggered to his feet. In the lurid light of breaking water he saw that the decks had been cleared—only the saloon-house remained standing. The boats were gone—a splinter of planking at a davit-fall was dangling in the wash of water. The lascar firemen were no longer rushing frantically about.

From somewhere in the darkness a man in agony called out, "O God! O God!" Dark against the foam, Day made out a figure crushed into the scuppers. It was the man who had been steersman. With those who were left, he dragged the maimed seaman to the shelter of the saloon-house. Brokenly, the man told what had happened. . . . "The firemen had tried to rush the boats. With the Captain, he had jumped from the bridge to stop them. . . . The Mate was holding them back at 'number three.' . . . Then the sea came. . . . All gone! Captain, Mate, firemen . . . everybody!"

Within the saloon-house a struggling mass of men and women were wedged into the stairway, striving to pass out through the narrow door. A big sailor, barring the exit, was shouting rude words of comfort, "Notings, I tole jou! Gott! Af jou comes tro' de door out——"

Joining his entreaties, Day strove to calm the crowd. His words had some effect. In the darkness no one could tell who spoke. It was enough

that a steady, commanding voice told them "there was a chance." . . . The wild, passionate outcry gave way to muttered prayers and the quiet sobbing of women. "She stood to that sea," said Day. "She can stand to any other! . . . Let free to work, we can do something; all may be saved! . . . But if hindered——"

A tall man, standing by the open doorway, faced sharply round. "A chance, Day?" He seized the officer's arm and glared into his eyes. "D'ye tell us there's any hope?"

"Aye—a chance, Major," said Day shortly. "God's sake, see you to the crowd!"

III

A chance. Where was it?

Crouching a-lee of the house, Captain Day surveyed his new command. . . . "All may be saved," he had said. How?

Boats? Two were still left, and there was a patent raft—if it could be got at. . . . No! no! No boat could live in that sea, of that he was sure. "Hold by the ship, sir," he had said to London. "Hold by the ship," he said now.

Forward, heavy seas were breaking over the deck—the bulwarks were part gone—an iron ventilator, torn from the deck, was hammering at the break

of the saloon. Again and again the relentless seas raced up and crashed aboard, sweeping across the sloping deck in a fury of white foam, carrying all before them. In the gloom the black bulk of the forecastle head was faintly visible. Over it seas were breaking, but at that height the weight and power of the water was gone, and only blinding spray wreathed the upstanding bow.

There . . . the chance !

It would be nearly high water now. When the tide fell the unsupported stern of the ship would part—would sink. If the bows were firmly fast, the jagged rocks holding their prey, the forepart would remain ! Yes ! The only hope lay in getting to the forecastle before the tide fell. But what a task ! That crowd (how many he could only guess) to be dragged through that lash and fury on the foredeck ! . . . Quickly he made up his mind. At the saloon door the survivors of the crew were already gathered.

"Men," he said, "we must get forward ! When tide falls she'll part . . . just here ! Quick—a volunteer to carry a line ! Who goes ?"

A long silence. Some of the men crept to the fore-end and saw the seas dashing man-high across the deck—the torn bulwarks—the battering ventilator. What chance had a man when stout iron fittings were torn apart like that ? They returned, eyeing one another furtively. Minutes passed. At last

one came forward—a mere boy—Conlan, the fifth engineer.

“Av ye say it’s t’ be done, Captain, we can but thry,” he said, as Day fastened the end of a boat-fall around him. It would not take long. No more than fifty yards from shelter to shelter. Young Conlan hesitated a moment at the fore-end—a moment only—then plunged forward into the rush of broken water.

For a time a steady strain on the line told that he was making way, then—the rope slacked up.

It was all over—a moment—they hauled the line in, unlashed the body and placed it in an angle of the house.

“I told ye it couldn’t be done,” cried some one hysterically. The ship’s surgeon pushed through the crowd and knelt at the body. There was no need of an opinion: a long gaping wound on the head showed how the gallant lad had met his death. All looked at Day with dark reproach. This was murder, they thought, and angry mutterings rose from the men.

“Silence there! Stand by the line again!” Day lashed the rope around his waist. “Stand by the line here—and give me slack!”

“Captain, can nothing else be done?” asked Major Hyde. “That seems sheer madness.” . . .

“No more o’ this bloody nonsense,” cried one of the

men. "No more o' that murderin' foredeck. The boats! The boats! . . . Take the chance!"

The lurid light from breaking seas fell on the ring of doubting faces. One man among many!

"No. No boats," said the old man. "God, men! D'ye think . . . boats . . . in that sea! No! If I saw ye all stark as young Conlan lies, I'd say th' same. We must get for'ard! So long as a man is left, we must try! Stand back there! Sheppard, tend the line!"

He was gone, unheeding the Third's unsteady, "I'll go, Captain . . . an old man . . . le' me go."

Gone! For a moment his tall figure was outlined against the white of blinding spray; then the plunge—a strain—a sudden rush, tearing the line from Sheppard's benumbed fingers!

With a dull boom a high sea crashed heavily on the foredeck. The line slackened up, the bight of it washing in a sweeping half-circle to leeward.

No one spoke.

The crouching men stared intently forward. One crept to the fore-end; there was nothing moving on through the wash and flurry of broken water. Should they haul in—to see what was left? Sheppard gathered in the slack of the line, a fathom or two, and then a strain. "The body would be jammed somewhere," he said wearily.

The men stared at one another. Who was to be

the next ? So long as a man of ye is left, the old man had said, before he went out—to that !

Suddenly Sheppard jumped from his knees. The line was paying out through his fingers—a fathom or so—then stopped !

“ By God ! He’s there still. Must be near th’ head by th’ line out.” With tense, eager face he held to the line. A minute passed ; there was no sign. Was he mistaken ? Could it have been but the weight of water that drifted the line from his stiffened fingers ? . . . “ No ! No ! ” This could be no rush of water. A few inches slipped through his fingers—again—again : the three pulls that were to tell him that communication was established.

A wild cheer, choked and broken, rose from the group of men ; the first heartening cry since the ship had struck—a cry that roused the despairing sufferers within to a knowledge that something had been done. All doubt vanished from the minds of the laboured crew. A step had been taken with success ; there was a definite lead to follow. Giant Hope roused their drooping spirits and sent the warm blood coursing through their numbed limbs.

“ Quick ! Who next ? You, Jansen ! An able man,” called Sheppard. Carrying a second line, the big Swede dashed forward, clinging to the first when the sea swept over, and working through the waters to the head.

Again—the three pulls!

The old lascar serang, livid and protesting, was thrust forward and securely fastened to the line; the signal given, he was hauled rapidly on. Then a wait while the lines were being set up and a rude cradle devised, and fast as the wearied men could hand the ropes the cradle was hauled back and fore, each time carrying one, or two at most, to the head.

For nearly two hours the work went on. A ceaseless rattle of block sheaves and hoarse cries of the straining men at the ropes—"On! On!" "The next!" "Back, you! Back! I say"—the menace of an arm upraised. A scene of desperate toil. A fight against time and tide. And, over all, the thunder of the great west wind, the crash of Sundered seas, the slat of driving spray—icy, keen, and cutting like a whip lash.

At length the cradle came rattling forward with its last load. Everything had been done. Huddled together in the crew's quarters, seventy-four souls had passing shelter from the fury of wind and sea. Action could serve no further purpose, it remained to await God's will. Whether the bow stood fast—or followed the dipping stern—when the tide fell.

Day, badly injured, lay under shelter of the fore-castle-head. When the sea broke he had secured good handhold, but the wash of water had driven him heavily against a torn deck-fitting.

“A rib or ribs broken,” the Doctor had said, as he bound him with rude bandages. “A serious matter for a man of his years, if he could not be kept quiet.”

“If he could not be kept quiet,” the Doctor had said. Outside, a whole gale howled its loudest, and every nerve of the wounded man within stood at its utmost tension, waiting for the rending crash that was to tell him that his work was good.

In that weary hour of waiting Day was a prey to the deepest anxiety. What, he thought, if it were the case of the *Centurion* over again. For the main disaster, thank God, he had no blame; he, whose ‘error’ that was, had gone to answer at the Court of the Great Assessor—but he alone was now answerable for every soul penned up in the gloomy fore-castle. At his order, frail women and delicate children had been taken from the comparative comfort of the saloon-house, dragged through a wash of icy water—to lie, drenched and benumbed, on the sodden fore-castle floor! . . . What if he had been mistaken in his action? Twenty years was a long time to be away from the sea! Ships were different now from then! The *Khandalla*, standing, might outlast the gale! If so, then brave young Conlan’s death stood to his account—a needless errand that he had sent him on! There was a woman, too, a delicate lady who had died of shock and exposure

while being dragged forward. Two more to add to the *Centurion's* fifty. Another 'error of judgment'—more blood on his hands.

Perhaps the ship would not part. When the tide fell away the whole shattered hull might take the plunge! . . . If that threatened, they could do nothing. They could not even take to the boats as a last despairing hope. Deliberately he had discarded them while they had the chance. . . . Perhaps—but "no," "NO," to that! Every instinct of a master-seaman told him that he had done right in refusing to use the boats. "Hold to the ship" had been his first word. It stood unaltered.

"Here, Major—Major Hyde—Sheppard—Jansen," he called, in his agony of thought. "God's name, look you if she moves aft there!" Exhausted by even the few words, he lay back on the sodden floor. He had a choking desire to cough, but he dared not. Blood welling into his throat told him that something within was wrong. The pain of his side was intense, but it was as nothing to his agony of mind.

"Come, come, Captain," said the Doctor, soothingly. "I tell you, you've no earthly chance if you excite yourself like that. She stands all right, hard and fast—and the weather is clearing."

"Clearing, is it? Then help me out—out there in the open. I must see—must see—what can be done."

Seeing further restless movement in any attempt to keep the old man within, Hyde and the Doctor gently removed him to the fore-castle door, where he lay at some ease.

The wind had shifted to the nor'west, still blowing strong, but the mist had gone, and the coast lights were visible. Out in the westward, some one saw the friendly gleam of the Smalls Light. By that Day recognised where they lay—on the dreaded Barrels. He thought of the tide-race—the whirling eddies—the over-falls—that ran there, even in fine weather—and the thought sustained him that, whatever happened, he was right in abandoning all thought of using the boats. Even the lifeboat could not work through that hellish sea and tide in the darkness. Long since, they on the wreck had heard guns booming from the lighthouse, and answering reports from the direction of the shore. Aye—whatever happened, he was right in holding by the ship. . . . But why did nothing happen? At least an hour's ebb must have run by now. . . . Why?

Carefully, as in the old schoolmaster days, he went over the facts again. Half-speed—the impact—the sudden list to starboard—the swaying of the stern. . . . Yes! Everything bore to him that she must part . . . and the weakest point—just below the bridge. If this was an 'error,' it was no error of hasty judgment. Though writhing in agony, mental

and physical, he had reasoned the matter to a conclusion. Some opposing force must be holding the ebbing water in check, but part she must when the supporting tide had fallen to a level of inertia.

A faint glow in the east showed where the welcome day would break. In the half-light the dark masses of the standing hull loomed up—gaunt and naked—shorn of all erections by the overpowering waves. Shock upon shock, the seas raced up and spent their fury in a wind-blown mass of spray.

"Sheppard. Did you feel that?" muttered the old man faintly. "A shudder—as the last sea struck. Half-ebb, it must be now. . . . She can't——" A rending crash put a period to his words.

The mighty hull that had so long withstood the battery of the elements reeled to a last resounding blow. Where the watchers stood, she rocked convulsively. Aft, the mass of funnel, bridge, and deck work swayed and tottered. Amid crash of splintered decks and shrill scream of buckling steel the *Khandalla*, strained beyond bearing, parted.

One brief moment of dread suspense for the watchers! A moment—while the great ship writhed in her last struggle against a greater power than wind or sea!

Then—the long-drawn breath of sheer relief! The after-part lay all but submerged, while, underfoot, the foredeck stood firmer than ever—jammed

to a greater stability by the last tremendous wrench.

IV

Dawn !

Fearsome masses of ragged storm-cloud breaking away from the horizon in the fury of a master wind—a grey and lurid clearing in the zenith—and under all, the furious sea. Rolling out of the nor'west, white-lashed by the remorseless wind, curling, breaking, crashing into shoal water, splitting on the ridges of rock awash and hurtling skyward in shattered columns of blinding spray. The white furious sea-whelps, unleashed by the great west wind on an errand of destruction.

Amid this, the lone shell of the once goodly *Khandalla*—a standing wreck, shock face to the bitter seas—a puny fragment of man's handiwork to front the strength and majesty of a nor'west gale.

From under the poor shelter of the fore-castle head, Day and his wearied crew watched the light grow. At times, a spasm of coughing comes on the old man, bringing the warm blood to his mouth and lips. "There is no doubt about it now," the Doctor says. "The broken rib must have pierced the lung." And Day knows that it is only a matter of time with him. Well ! It is better to go off thus, he thinks, than linger on to a life of drudgery in the junior ranks. Thank God that debt to the *Centurion* is

paid in full ! Fifty lives was the cost of his 'error of judgment,'—here are seventy-three souls who, without his action, would now be the sport of the waters that surge over the grisly wreck yonder. If only the lifeboat would come, and he could see the crowning result of his judgment, it would be easy enough to 'cast off.'

It will be that hellish sea and tide that is delaying a rescue. Perhaps, now that the flood is making, they might—— Near him big Jansen jumps to his feet with a roar of cheer : " A boat ! A boat ! De lifeboat ! " and clambers to the standing rigging. " *Ja ! Ja !* De lifeboat—ant a steam trawler towin' her out ! Close to, Cabtin ! Close to ! *Gott !* Dey rides heavy ! All awash, Cabtin ! "

Calling Sheppard to him, Day gasps out instructions. Nothing must be left undone to hasten the work of rescue. A coil of stout rope is dragged from the weltering peak-hold, sailors' chests from the fore-castle are lashed to it at intervals, and the line paid out a-lee.

Over the sea-line the dripping bows of a Channel trawler heave in sight. Driving her head to the furious sea, under a whirling smoke-wrack, rising giddily, casting the water from her in streaming cascades, dipping anew into the foaming hollows, she lurches grandly on ! Astern, the lifeboat staggers in her wake—veiled in driving spray, poised

in sickening incertitude on a towering wave—then sweeping down the windward sloping furrow.

Nearer they draw. The watchers can make out the lettering on the trawler's bow—the men on her decks, bent and swaying to meet the staggering lurches of their vessel. At last, when perilously close to the broken water, S.A. 076 casts off her straining burden. Steam can do no more! Now—as a hundred years ago—it is left for brawny arms and stout oars to master the eddying furies of the dreaded Barrels!

The lifeboat scarce seems to make headway. Wind and sea and tide are weighed against her, but her gallant crew ply swift and steady oars. Foot by foot she draws on! They are nearing the bobbling sea-chests! But can that furious stroke last? Already the bowmen are pulling out of time! . . . Together again—a last feverish spurt! The wet blades flash, flash, flash against the light—foam flies from their dipping oars—only the crest of a sea lies between them and the line! . . . Hard driven, she rides high and plunges into the foaming hollow! . . . Again she rises to view. A hoarse cheer from the trawler's men greet her. The bowmen are leaning to the line—the oars at rest—and the stout rope creaks to the weight of the heaving boat.

Now they are hauling in, the cox'n standing up at the stern, gazing anxiously ahead for sign of the

black jagged spur that he knows must be but awash. At speaking distance he hollows his hands to carry a hail against the wind. " The . . . wreck . . . A-hoy ! How . . . many . . . are 'oo ? . "

Sheppard, braced in the rigging, answers . . . " Seventy-four. "

" Seventy-four ! " The lifeboatmen 'vast hauling on the rope and stare, incredulous, at the unsteady figure in the rigging. " Seventy-four ! "

They had expected only a few broken survivors of a great disaster. Whose hand had herded seventy-four into that grim shell of twisted plating—the only standing remnant that had outlived a wild night on the Barrels ? . . . They think of the stout line drifted down to them—of the sea-chests, black and unsightly in the white of broken water ! A master hand, whoever . . . !

Cheering hoarsely, they strained anew at the rope. Here is a call for desperate haste, if seventy-four were to be taken off before the jagged spurs of cruel rock showed above the ebbing water ! . . . " Another flag or cloth in the riggin' , " yells the cox'n. " Bring out th' Milford boat ! *Diwedd-i* ! Thirty-five iss all I can be takin' ! . . . Hurry, I tell 'oo ! Give us 'oore 'oomin an' children ! "

Nerved by the cheering lifeboatmen, the survivors of the *Khandalla* set to their task. The women and children, in pitiable plight, are steadied

across the sloping deck ; one by one, sent down by ropes, caught at by brawny arms as the wildly sheering lifeboat rises on a crest, are unlashèd—the cradle is swung aboard again for the next !

A crowded hour ! An hour of stir and action, after the long, anxious wait in the gloomy fore-castle.

Withal, danger is yet near ! The furious nor'west sea is not to be so easily robbed of its prey ! A huge breaker swings between the wreck and lifeboat—a lash of icy spray dashes to the eager eyes of the watchers. How stands the boat ?

Gallantly, when the mist and spume have cleared, the veteran cox'n, sure of hand and eye, bearing on the steering oar that has swerved his buoyant craft aside.

Again—sheering in—the swaying rope with its precious human load—hoarse cries, cheer and encouragement from the laboured men, as the women, ill-clad, benumbed, sick of a night of horrors, step bravely to the fearsome ordeal, confiding to the stout arms of the gallant Welsh boatmen.

A stirring hour ! No one has eyes but for the scene of rescue. No one marks the Doctor rising to his feet from beside a prone, quiet figure. No one sees the red blood that dyes an old man's beard. Only the Doctor, standing moodily apart, knows that Captain Day—Captain Day of the *Centurion*—has cast off !

III

A DEEP-WATER CRITIC

CRUDE, perhaps, and curious, the outcome of a life apart, sailormen have yet an appreciation of the arts. They see the beauty in the crest of a running sea, poetry in the grace of a leaning ship, and hear the music in the sound of wind in the rigging, in the cries of sea-birds circling in the wake. Though they may dismiss the thought with a wayward curse, or rebuke a sober shipmate for speaking of it—‘talkin’ soft an’ that’—none the less do they feel the influence of an impression, momentary perhaps, but recognisable, when it is recalled to them in picture, by words, or sound.

Once, in the Walker Gallery, I was looking at ‘The Death of Nelson.’ There was a man with the look of a seaman standing by me. He had a noticeable smell of drink and was chewing tobacco: his blue cloth suit had hard shiny creases, as if it had just been bent from his sea-chest. He, too, was interested in the picture, and, recognising me as

seamanlike, he said something, and we got to be talking about Nelson and his times.

“B’gad, mate, them fellers (the painters, he meant) knowed wot they was a-doin’. Look at that ’ere glim (lantern). Looks as if its trimmin’ was forgot wen they brought th’ Admiral down . . . an’ them eyes,”—pointing to a wounded seaman in the near foreground,—“them’s th’ eyes o’ poor ’Arkness wot come off th’ main yard las’ voy’ge, an’ struck th’ fife-rail, full on.”

He told me of the accident—how it happened—and by his eyes and rude simple speech, I saw it all. As plain before me as the figure of the stricken seaman, I saw ’Arkness come off the main yard, clutching wildly at the sheets and lifts as he fell : I heard him strike the rail and lie stretched . . . saw the running figures on the deck . . . “’e never larsted th’ night. We buried ’im out there : Taltal, it was,” said my speaker, involuntarily twisting his shoulder to an imaginary sou’west.

There was a sea-picture, a ship coming up to the Isle o’ Wight,—clean curving sails, a good sense of movement, and a fine breezy atmosphere.

“Jest wot it is,” said my friend. “’Omeward boun’. *Let ’er go, boys,*” he shouted loudly in a sudden burst of enthusiasm that made some visitors glance round, alarmed. A warden of the galleries drew nigh. My mate stood back the better to see

the picture: he had a fine attitude, the body leaning forward and his right arm swung across in a grand sweep. What mattered that his legs were slightly unsteady?

Possibly my appearance of sobriety reassured the official: he stood by, awaiting further brawls, but my mate was taken by a near picture of a sombre landscape and had become silently critical, so the officer moved aside and did no more than keep us in view during our visit. There were other fine pictures, but we did not feel that we had a right to do more than look at them and admire. With the sea-pictures it was different. They were our world, and who had the right to criticise the way a sea was moving off the skyline if we had not? Too often had we watched, anxious-eyed, for a break in the clouds not to know the way of wind on the water, the scend of a cloud breaking free in a welcome shift; well we knew the curve of a standing sail and the relation it bore to the sense of movement.

For a city of the sea, Liverpool has no great representation of her foremost industry on her chamber walls. In vain we looked for the pictures of the Mersey that should have stood boldly on line: pictures of fine clippers coming to their anchors under sail—of pioneer steam-packets beating out their tread under short canvas and the wind broad abeam blowing a trail of smoke to the water—of

Majestics and *Lusitanias* canting on the flood. In vain! There was little call for sea-critics downstairs, so we went to an exhibition of modern art in the upper galleries. Here we found ourselves properly confronted. "Setting sail after a blow," it was. A large canvas: a ship pitching heavily in the track of a recent gale, and the crew putting sail on her. It held a great message for my mate (black smoke and an ever-throbbing screw had not yet dulled his sea-fancy), and he was highly pleased. "Them seas . . . wot ye gets off th' Plate. . . ." He wanted to shout some word of cheer, to swing his right hand to the left shoulder in seamanlike admiration, but the cold grey eye of a tall-hatted official was upon us (*Huh!* . . . sailors!), and there was a group of young ladies near by, worshipping at the shrine of a Corporation purchase. So he contented himself by nudging me somewhat painfully. "That's wot I calls a picter," he said.

A sunset over water claimed our attention. A blood-red sky with no clouds, only a slight density near the horizon. I said it was remarkable, perhaps unreal.

"That's where ye ain't in it, mister. Look a here. If ye wos t' take all the colours in th' locker, so 's ye had lots o' red an' yeller in, I'd find ye a sky t' match it. Ain't ye never 'eard o' wot them Dagoes calls th' blood o' Chris' . . . them Dagoes wot loads ye ballast in th' Plate?"

I had not heard.

"Well. It's a sky like that, an' it comes afore one o' them pamperos. Min' Ah was lyin' in Monte Video on'st, an' we 'ad a sky all blood-red an' never a cloud, an' th' fishin' boats was all comin' in—not rowin' shipshape same 's me an' you 'd do . . . them shovin' th' oars same 's they was pushin' a bloody barrer." He spat into a dark corner, and said something more about Dagoes, then continued " . . . Nex' day we 'ad a gale—'owlin it was, an' her divin' into it same 's we was off th' 'Orn an' a big German barque driv' down on us an' took th' fore-to'gallan'mas' out o' 'er an' th' boom an' started all th' 'ead gear. . . . Two ships was driv' ashore, an' that's wot comes out o' them skies wot they calls th' blood o' Chris'."

There was a prominent picture of a fishing lugger running in from sea. 'Nearing Home,' it was called. My mate's eye was drawn by the light draught of the boat. "Looks 's if they ain't got no catch aboard, ridin' 'igh an' light like that. Dunno wot th' 'ell that feller at th' tiller looks so pleased about. . . . An' it fine fishin' weather too."

It was an impressionist picture that annoyed my mate; an impression of a scene in dock, with masts and funnels and hulls all mixed up. The colouring was good, the impression was there if detail was wanting, but the ships might have been ninepins or

egg-boxes or anything. At first my mate was perplexed, then amused, then indignant.

"Oh, Chrisst," he said. "Wotinell 's this? Ships, begad, or I'm a Dutchman." He burst into a fit of rude laughter. "Ships it is, mister—an' min' ye look at them tawps'l yards. . . . Ships wi' double tawps'ls below th' main an' an 'angman's gibbet f'r a gaff an' spars a stickin' out as thick as badgers 'airs." In his excited state he seemed to have the idea that a strong gale was blowing, that he was hailing me from the fore-royal-yard, that heavy, hearty work was afoot—he bawled, as though a squall were suddenly upon us. . . . "Them fellers 's got some cheek, mister. That's wot Ah calls it—bloody cheek t' be paintin' things like that. . . . 'Oly Sailor, look at them . . ."

The tall-hatted gentleman had approached, and was speaking severely to us. "If we could not behave ourselves we would have to go out. Such language could not be tolerated. It was disgraceful." Shamefaced, we went out, parted, and went our ways.

I never learned his name, but I often think of my comrade of an hour, the man who chewed tobacco and spat in dark corners of a Temple of the Arts, and who, with me, was put out of the Walker Gallery.

I hope he has a good ship, and is still fond of

pictures. I hope, even after what happened, he is not ashamed to show his feelings and still swings his right arm to the left, his body swaying forward, and shouts, "*Let 'er go, boys,*" when he sees a good picture of a ship under sail!

IV

UNCLAIMED REWARDS

THE purser has many friends, the weather is wet, and the taverns are cosy, and so, though twelve has struck, we are still in the Shipping Office and waiting to be paid off.

We try to engage the office people in conversation, to learn something of the doings in Glasgow port while we have been on our three months' voyage to India and back, but it is their busy day, and they have little time to spare. We scan the 'Notices to Mariners' with professional curiosity and learn of new lights and beacons in remote Highland bays, places where only seamen go who can name them correctly: we read a long and formidable list of convictions obtained by the Board of Trade for infringements of the Merchant Shipping Acts, learn of the awful penalties imposed for overloading a ship or for taking a Customs officer to sea for company: interest ourselves in the toll of boarding masters, tailors, runners, and other 'queer fellows' being

rounded up for overzeal in quest of custom. Seamen, too, for altering certificates and discharges, for failure to join, for desertion and insubordination, have their punishments here recorded, and the large board, heavily placarded with untidy leaflets, forms a sorry record of seafaring iniquity—a sort of maritime black list.

Depressed by these records of legal proceedings, it is with a sense of relief that we turn to 'Unclaimed Rewards,' a large bill with strong black headlines that attracts our attention, and we employ ourselves conjecturing the possible whereabouts of those absent-minded mariners whose awards the Board of Trade are at such pains to advertise. Here and there on the list there are names scored through: some have come by their own; but the placard is of a long date and stained by time.

Here are gold, silver, and bronze medals; sextants, binoculars, and silver plate; diplomas, and sums of money ranging from an item of 19s. 2½d. (the exchange would make the odd coppers) to an award of £72 by a South American Government for wrongful arrest. The list reminds us that adventure and romance are still to be met at sea. Gallantry, unheralded by the Press, unnoticed by the public, and only recorded in some obscure log-book, is here set out in single lines, cold and terse, of official print. Although British seamen for the time being, these

unvoiced heroes are mostly of foreign birth, men of all nations who answer to the sailor terms of ' Dutchman ' or ' Dago.' Serving from time to time under many flags, they are not so easily traced as the Britisher, and thus their awards fall to be advertised in the Shipping Offices. We hazard opinions to account for the difficulty in tracing seamen.

" Desertions abroad," says the Mate. " Conscription on the Continent too. Most of these foreign seamen serving with us have little liking for official enquiries : too often it ends in their being hauled off to the ' happy Vaterlant ' and a year's spell in a disciplinary battalion. . . . So *Yon Shmit von Liverpool* becomes *George Davis*, *b'long Hool* on his next voyage. He would find it pretty hard to prove his identity after such a walk round."

It is still raining outside, and above the glazed part of the office windows I can see the flags of the Channel boats hanging motionless against the masts. From the next room the official voice of a deputy superintendent reaches us. He is reading in a passionless monotone the text of obligations and emoluments, of fines and forfeitures, to a depressed and motley crowd who are signing on for the westward. Having read the articles he repeats the important part of the agreement, " that the crew are to be on board, sober, at five minutes past twelve midnight." Then there is a shuffling of feet, rustling

of waterproofs, and subdued hum, as the men stand forward to sign. I turn again to the poster.

"J. Jansen, seaman of the barque *Maria* of Yarmouth, N.S. . . . £2, for rescue of crew of brigantine *Lauretta* of Beaumaris."

Not a very princely sum, indeed, but it is not likely that J. Jansen thought of £2 . . . or £22 . . . when he took his place on the heaving thwart. Where is J. Jansen now? Has he met the fate from which he helped to rescue the crew of the *Lauretta* of Beaumaris, or does he consider his gallant action as merely a bit of a yarn to help out a dreary middle watch? Delay in granting the award has possibly helped him to forget the occasion that called for it, and he may now be shouldering a musket on the ramparts by the Scheldt or combing the beach at Callao, ignorant that his deed has called forth more than the cheers of his whilom shipmates!

"Seaman and boy of smack *Ark* of Hull, for services to crew of *Alma*, . . . £2 . . ." Their very names unknown!

"Amos Stradlander, mate; Jan Mayer, steward; and three others, all of the barque *Chinampas* of Pictou, . . . for rescue of crew of ship *Ellerbank* of Liverpool."

A mate and four hands—a boat's crew! Queer place that for a steward—second hand in a life-boat! Evidently it was a call for volunteers. One

could picture the scene. A huge Atlantic sea and swell and a foul black sky. The *Ellerbank* rolling in the trough of the sea like a dead thing, her boats gone, and signals of distress flying from what once were tall and shapely spars. The *Chinampas* hove to to windward of the wreck, and her captain and mate talking of the 'chances.' To leeward of the quarter-house the crew would be gathered, huddled and bent to meet the driving, biting sea and spray. Anxious eyes are cast on the towering sea and on the wreck, muttered misgivings pass from man to man, and ever their eyes turn to the two officers talking together of the 'chances.' Here is no multitude to applaud, no amphitheatre for a deed of valour! Naught but two lone ships on a heaving sea; . . . the mate starts to take off his heavy sea-boots and the captain asks for a crew.

At first, no answer to the call. The men hang back, eyeing one another furtively; an elder hand stares long to windward and shakes his head. And now the steward (probably seaman as well, for they have no use for idlers aboard these bluenose barques) steps forward and ranges himself by the mate. . . . And that—— "What? Hang back when a 'dish-washer' stands out?" No hesitation now! So the boat is manned and——

The rustle of papers and the ring of coin bring me back to the rainy Broomielaw and the Shipping

Office. I hear my name called in an official undertone, and turn to find the Chief counting his money and the purser handling my account of wages. I transact my little business, pipeclay my ship's account, and stow the balance away in my stamp case.

Business has now become slack in the Shipping Office, and, but for our signing off, there is little to do. The junior clerks are taking the paper off their cuffs and are preening themselves before going out to lunch. At the end desk a maudlin seaman is stating, for the benefit of nobody in particular, his definite opinion of his late captain's course of conduct. The stalwart indoor policeman who attends to these little affairs eyes him tolerantly, but not without professional interest.

We pass out into the rainy street and find a crowd of seamen about the doors seeking employment. A dreary-looking crowd indeed, listlessly pacing to and fro in twos and threes in the lee of the high buildings. They are mostly foreigners and coloured men, for the local seamen and west Highlandmen, relying on the presence of a stout countryman in the Office (who will send round a fiery cross when ‘ sights ’ are going), are seated in the Bethel reading-room, turning over the pictures, as like as not, in last century's *Illustrated London News*.

Down the street, taking the whole breadth of the

pavement, a 'homeward bounder' steers an erratic course. By the trim of him, he has been newly paid off and is flush of a long voyage's pay. He has on a decent suit of very new and very blue serge. He waves a brand-new yellow kid glove to emphasise his loud but incoherent remarks. (Its fellow is probably lying among the sawdust in some sailor-town public-house.) His clothes, all mud adown one side, show that the last publican he has visited has had jealous regard for his licence. The polish on his fine new boots shows the activity of the Broomielaw shoeblacks, and his good felt hat (but for a dinge and a smear of mud) must have cost a solid sum. The seamen about the Office doors make way for him, sympathetically, and with many envious glances. (Some among them would quite likely have been in the same prosperous condition a week ago.) He lurches heavily past us, asking himself questions in a many-vowelled dialect of northern Europe, and bears up for the Iona Vaults, several of the 'hard ups' following, in case he should have a difficulty in procuring supplies. We gaze after him with nothing of contempt in our looks, for have we not just been reading of 'unclaimed rewards'?

At the corner he pauses to throw a curse and a shilling at an importuning street urchin. He collides violently with a lamp-post, and appeals

to many deities against the presence of such an obstruction to safe navigation.

I think of a mate taking off his heavy sea-boots, of a captain asking for a crew, and turn to have another look at 'Jack ashore.'

Quien sabe? He may be J. Jansen or even Jan Mayer, once steward of the barque *Chinampas*, of Pictou.

V

THE SCRIBE

ANNAJI SAKHARAM is his name, and he sits low on the verandah of the little branch Post Office outside the Prince's Dock Gate. He is quite unofficial, and has no legitimate connection with the dignified B.A. who issues stamps and Money Orders at the wicket. True, I have seen them conversing amiably together when business is slack, or when some untoward event has happened in the vicinity, but for the most part they preserve an air of distance during business hours. The verandah lies north and south, and it is only in the forenoons, when the sun is behind the Office, that Annaji is prepared to attend to his clients. He comes, then, about eight in the morning, sets out his low stool, his portfolio of papers, his pens, ink, sealing-wax,—his pouch of betel-nut and lime he puts carefully on a sheltered ledge. I think he has two turbans. I have seen him walking on the street, and his appearance then did not seem to me to be so dignified as when he sits writing his

letters. I think he must have an ordinary head-dress for leisure—I know he has an important one with a gold thread and scalloped edges for business hours. Then,—his spectacles. Ah! Never did spectacles express so much learning and experience as Annaji's. They are quite round, with thick nickel rims; the curves of the plated holders go completely round his ears and stick out under the lobes like pendent jewellery. He wears the glasses low down on his nose, and peers over the tops when interrogating his clients. Annaji's face is placid and unlined, so it is difficult to come at his age; but it is many years now since first I saw him sitting, cross-legged, at his writing, and he looks the same now as then.

Truly, Annaji Sakharam has all the secrets of the Bunder at his finger-ends. He it is who writes all the letters, the petitions, the statements for the waterside folk. He can turn them out in Marathi, Urdu, Indo-por, and English—though it is at the latter he shines. If you are Albuquerque de Loma, and your wife Concepcion, down at Goa, has written to you for more money, there is nothing easier than to sit cross-legged by Annaji's side, state your case clearly, and leave it to him to explain to her that rupees do not grow readily on the trees. Should you be Najib Shaboodeen Abdooraman, lascar serang, and wishful to draw your Chief Officer's attention

to the small matter of a rise in your pay, no one can better put forth your claims than Annaji, the scribe. He will question you—for so far as that is needful—but you may take it that your confidence will not be abused. While it is true that there is a regular tariff in the matter of letter-writing, I have the idea that there is some such arrangement as a post-settlement should one's material prosperity be enhanced by the aid of Annaji's facile pen.

The other day I received a communication from my old barber. This was the letter :

RESPECTED SIR—I beg to undersigned Johan Barber, Sir. I have been served above steamer five years between in this five years 3 Time I was went to my native country by keeping subsitute of to perform my shaving work. Last time in month of June when I was arrived by steamer in Bombay then I was receive a Letter from my native place that for my daughter married every thing is settle made come soon. So Sir on my work I was kept a subsitute Barber Gawoosi Mahoméd by the promised when I will be return then you kindly give back my work and sir I went away to my native. Now I am arrived here on the . . . and the steamer is arrived and I am asking the same fellow to whom I was put in my place for the subsitute of shaving work. Sir. He is refusing not giving me back my work Speaking proudly Sir I am a poor man Where I may go and speak all of my complain Sir Thinking 1st god and afterwards you Sir I was kindness giving him my work for as a subsitute only to perform for one

trip Now he is doing forcely to take my bread sir In this five years how I was passed my days your honour knows about my conduct and sir I am not keeping any other hope except you my officer will be justify. Sir my children thinking me parent and sir I thinking you my parent and in my daughter married I got debt for other people about Three Hundred Rs and in this hope I am arrived from the country in time of ship arrived when I was went and asked that for to give back my work he given me such a hard replyin proudly from that I am quite could not said a word and at present I am in such hard circumstances that for god knows

. . . By the act of Benivolance.

A clear appeal—a hard case indeed! By the aid of Annaji's broad J. one is made 'forcely' to see the poor ill-used old servitor driven from his work by the machinations of the cunning 'substitute.' A hard case! But it has no foundation in fact. Last voyage Johan went to his country. There was no talk of 'substitutes' or of his coming back. He bade me a courteous farewell, and accepted a small *douceur* and a reference *chiti*. 'In such hard circumstances that for god knows.' I see no sign of such hard circumstances. Johan's cap is gold embroidered, and must have cost Rupees fifteen; his razor box is studded with cunning brasswork; his upturned shoes are new and costly, and his attire in general is not consistent with a declaration of extreme poverty.

Nevertheless, I have put Gawoosi Mahomed away, and Johan Shaban comes to me in the mornings 'on the business of shaving work.' But Annaji's letter has nothing to do with the change. Gawoosi ate GARLIC !

I have reason to think that Annaji has received a present for what is thought to be his share in the matter. Now, when I go to the Post Office to see that my letters are properly date-marked, he salaams courteously and addresses me as *Huzoor*.

VI

STOCKHOLM TAR

THEY were repairing rigging on a Russian barque, and the clean wholesome odour of Stockholm tar was borne on the wind to us, as we lay, smothered in choking dust, 'coaling' against time, that we might sail with the evening's tide. On our vessel, a gaunt naked collier, everything was in disorder: decks littered with cargo, gear, and stores, and thick with the dust from the coal-tips; every one in a hurry, bustling to and fro, seeing to this or that before dark fell. Grimy figures about the coal-tips and the hatchways swaying long poles and shouting hoarse cries, "From under there, from under!" Then the coal, rumbling and rattling down the iron shutes and raising, skyward, a cloud of blinding dust. A clatter of chain runners as the empty waggons are run off, and again the hoarse cry, "From under there, from under!" A busy scene of haste and hurry, a marked contrast to quiet routine aboard of the Russian.

She was an old vessel, probably a 'crack' American packet in her day, for her stern, rounded in seemly curves, was just what those master shipwrights of Bath and Delaware would put afloat in the 'sixties. Built masts, heavy lower yards, and a good spread of rigging, all told of a worthy vessel ; but the pump-windmill turning lazily in the fitful breeze, and the thin stream of clean water trickling from her scuppers, showed that her staunchness was a thing of the past, and that the years had brought her to her last aventure, timber droghing in the North Atlantic. Her crew of blue-eyed Finns were discharging the cargo, heaving logs out of the massive bow ports and turning them on a rough stage, from whence they were dragged ashore by stout horses, to cries of encouragement and cracking of whips.

Others of her crew were in the topmast rigging, working at the shrouds. Pigmy figures they looked, bold against the clear sky. They were tarring the shrouds, and the sight and the old familiar smell brought back memories of days when I 'signed' for the 'Horn' under canvas, before 'knocking-off the sea, to go in steamboats'; memories of hot days in the Tropics, when the south-east 'Trades' filled the sails, and we were at it, hard at it, 'tarring down.' The light steady breeze keeping the sails ataut, clambering figures on the spidery rigging, a hot sun, and the smell of tar—clean, wholesome Stockholm tar,

beloved of sailormen, their remedy for all ills. How gingerly, at first, we would touch the sticky mess ; a wad, perhaps, or an old mitt, and a little care, and—but then a shout from the keen-eyed bosun and a hail from the deck far below would tell that our 'niceness' was observed, and was being held forth to 'all hands' in stentorian shouts. "Now, then, main t'galn yard, there ! Goin' t' be awl day at them foot-ropes ? Ho ! It's 'is 'ands, is it ? All right, men, git on wit' yer work. Never mind th' young gen'elman as wants t' keep 'is 'ands clean fer playin' th' pianny. Ho, yus ! It's 'is 'ans, it is ! Where's 'is walet as'll take 'im hup a clean towel an' a cake o' scentid soap for 'is nice, delikit 'ans ? " After that there was nothing for it but to throw caution to the winds, and dip into the pot, over the wrists, all the time keeping an eye on the fore to see that your mate didn't get off his yard before you. When the pot was empty, down to the deck again for a fresh supply, a few minutes for a drink, and, perhaps, if you had done well, a puff or two at a pipe, and then, "Up wit' ye, me son ! Weather tawps'l yardarm, an' mind them Flemish 'orses ! "

And so the sun, passing high o'er our heads and working down to the western horizon, would see us still at it when the fleecy 'trade' clouds gathered about his setting. Daybreak to sunset was a long

day, but it was finished, this 'tarring down,' finished for the voyage, when the last man came down from aloft and we gathered about the galley-door to clean ourselves and prepare for a scant supper. And then, when the rising moon would touch our work, lining the yards and rigging with a silver thread, we would put our tarry clothes in the now empty tar-barrel and set it alight and afloat, and watch it flaming and spluttering 'way astern till eight bells were struck and the watch would go below.

That was in other days, but now we were in a grimy collier, working against time to sail with the evening's tide. Dark falls and brings with it a 'smirring' of thin rain, a bounty to 'lay' the choking dust. We have but two hours to finish, and the siding still shows a long line of waiting waggons. Huge flares at the coal-tips give light to the workers, and the incessant cry, fainter and scarce articulate now, marks the tipping of a waggon, "Fr'under, there—under!" At last, with a pile of coal at each hatchway, piles that will take an hour's hard 'trimming,' we haul out from under the tips and warp across the dock. Electric arcs shine out at the pierhead, and the lights of the low town across the river shine and twinkle as lights do on wet nights. The muddy flood bears in from the sea, surging past the pierheads and seeking under the grimy wharves. The dock gates are not yet open.

but moving oilskin-clad figures on the dockside and the rattle of chains thrown down or levers shipped in readiness—all tell of an early start. We are waiting near where the Russian barque lies. Her tall masts and spars tower in the darkness above us. There is a glimmer of light through an open door, and forward one plays a fiddle—a quick, uncanny tune that Finns play on dark nights. She lies quiet at her moorings, this old timber 'drogher.' With her is no crazy night-work, no unseemly haste, no putting to sea in a state of reckless insecurity, with hatches open and derricks aloft. When God's good daylight wanes her sailormen cease work, and the old barque, unmindful of screaming whistles, clattering winches, and hoarse shouts from the dockhead, lies quietly at her moorings, and about her is a clean, wholesome odour, an odour of rough-hewn logs and Stockholm tar.

VII

THE 'REAL' CASHMIRI SHAWL

HADJI MAHOMMED CASSUM—whose other name, as shown by his trade card, is Messrs. Cheap Jack and Company, general orders supplier,—came on board on Sunday morning to see what business could be done. With him came a small coolie boy, staggering under the weight of a large flat basket. The basket contained the Hadji's stock of ' 'tassa silks, Madrassi cloth, em-broider' tea-cloth, mantle barder, cus'in cover, Benares brass an' ruppees silverwork, *Sahib!*'—the usual stock of a Muslim box-wallah who does business with confiding sailor folk.

On Sunday was his only chance. On working days the thunderous clank and rattle of throbbing winches and the cries of men at the hatches interfered with the due extolling of each and all of his wares. This the Hadji knew. He knew, too, that the time and leisure necessary for the proper conduct of barter was not to be thought of on working days—unless, maybe, in the case of the '*Daktar Sahib!*'

So, on Sunday morning, after waiting considerably till we had selected a cool spot and a long chair, the Hadji advanced to the attack with a profusion of two-handed salaams.

He would be a man of mark in Islam—the Hadji. His red-dyed beard and green turban showed me that he had performed the Haj—the pilgrimage to Mecca. Those thick lips that uttered so many courteous greetings and compliments on my apparent well-being had kissed the Keblah! So, I thought, I shall acquire merit in being cheated by such a holy man! But, in good time! In good time! There is my budget of news to be attended to!

"*Salaam, Sahib*," he repeated, after a due interval had passed.

"Get out!" I said snappishly. "Get out! *Jao!*" A man does not like to have his reading of a fortnight-old *Lorgnette* interfered with on the cool of a quiet Sunday morning.

The Hadji squatted on his haunches on deck. The small boy put down the basket with a sigh of content, and promptly went to sleep.

"*Sahib!* I got it good tings, dis time! You like de look?"

"*Jao, Sooar! Jao!!*"

The Hadji stroked his red-dyed beard. 'Pig,' indeed! Was this the way to treat a holy man, lately returned from perilous adventure. There

would be an extra eight annas or a rupee to pay for that '*Sooar*,' I felt!

"*Sahib!* You look see! No cost for lookin', Sir!" The Hadji untied a bundle and exposed a pile of gilt-embroidered tea-cloths. I had a mind to call the quartermaster and have the holy one summarily removed. But then, I thought—Sunday! He, too, would have his papers on mail day, and would now probably be deeply immersed in the advertisement pages of the *Oban Times*.

The Hadji held a long mantle border outspread on two arms. "Sewen rupees, *Sahib*," he said simply; but his eyes told me that it was rare value, that—only to me—could he consent to part with it at that ridiculous price.

I showed a proper contempt; the mantle border was put aside. Then another, and on, till the bundle was exhausted. Gilt embroidery was clearly not a selling line and the Hadji turned to his brasswork—arranging the plates, vases, and unnameable ornaments in serried ranks. Each was handled with a due reverence—imaginary specks of dust were carefully blown from the carved work. A sight to gladden the soul of Brummagem!

All to no purpose: I hold by the engineer's view of brasswork!

At the opening of the fourth bundle I made some demur. "Don't want anything," I said, picking up

my paper and trying to resume reading. It was hopeless! Even *Lorgnette* had lost interest, for, all the time as I read, I knew the Hadji's eyes were on me, that he was patiently waiting for me to turn my attention to business.

A dress length of 'tassa' (Tussore) silk was spread out ready for my inspection; he rustled it between his hands. "Chirrp like canary, *Sahib*," he said.

"Chirrp like Hades!" said I, "take it away!"

"Cheap, *Sahib*! Only twenty-two rupee!"

"Twen-ty-two rupee!" I echoed. "You must think you've got a 'greenhorn'!"

"*Arre nay, Sabib!*" The Hadji became as dust to my feet. "*Arre nay!* I saavy you blenty time comin' Bombay! If I tink you new gentlee-man sahib, I askin' twenty-five rupee!"

Here was a fine turn of Oriental sophistry! Deliberately he shows himself a rogue that I might esteem myself smart in driving a bargain! The Hadji had learned more than his prayers—over there at Mecca! I picked up a shawl and examined it carelessly. "Reel Cashmiri, *Sahib*," said the Hadji, admiring the texture between his finger and thumb. "Make in de Cashmir, *Sahib*!—dese Hindu fella!"

"*Manchester ke saman hai*," I said, throwing it down with an exaggerated gesture of contempt. The Hadji, with a stern frown, lifted it, folded it

carefully, and stowed it away in his bundle. At first silent, his indignation got the upper hand. "*Arre, Sahib*," he said. "You no saavy dat Cashmir, for speakin' like dat! How can makin' in Manchester like dat?" He drew a large ring from his finger, entered the end of the shawl (slipped from the bundles in some mysterious way), and pulled it swiftly through.

Still I was scornful.

Then his face brightened, and he came at me on a new tack. He turned to the sleeping boy—"De *Sahib* makin' jokin', no? He makin' de fun! Laugh—he make laughin'!" The boy slept solidly on; he was making a purring noise with his nose.

"Oh! *Bhun karao*," I said testily. "Pack up and get out! *Jao!* Don't want any of your jammed trash. *Jao!*"

The Hadji stared at me anxiously. This! when business was going on so nicely, quite up to the standard of a bazaar transaction!

I picked up my paper again, lit a fresh cheroot—tried dropping the ash on his goods. No use! The Hadji flicked the ash off and courteously removed the goods out of my way.

"If dis no real Cashmiri—you look, *Sahib!*" He tore a thread from the edge of the shawl, lit one of my matches and applied it; the thread frizzled and emitted a pungent odour. I had an idea that

wool would give the same, but was too lazy to experiment. The Hadji would know that.

"*Sahib!*"—confidentially, looking round to see that no one was there to note his weakness—"I sell you for cheap! I give you for ten rupee! I wantin' de money for luck; not sold one *pice* dis morning. Ten rupee?"

"Ten rupee! Ten rupee!! Go to," I said.

"How much give, *Sahib?* What price you t'ink?"

I said I wouldn't take it as a gift.

He bundled it carelessly and placed it beside my chair. "What you like, *Sahib,*" he said with a fine air of resignation!

"Wouldn't give you ten annas! Take it away! No use to me," I said.

"Present for lady! De *Memsahib* likin' dat real Cashmiri shawl!" He arranged it, full length, on top of the basket and sleeping boy.

I looked to be deep in my paper—made no answer. For a time the conversation was left to two perky crows, quarrelling over a dead rat or something, but soon the Hadji returned to the attack. He was a famous stayer—Hadji Mahomed Cassum, whose other name was Messrs. Cheap Jack and Company, General Orders supplier!

"S'pose you gettin' too cheap, *Sahib,* how much you give?"

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"Hangnation! Don't — want — it — at — all! Wouldn't buy it at any price!"

"*Arre*, no, *Sahib*. No! No! No buyin'"—The Hadji held out both hands and deliberately and tangibly pushed the suggestion to one side. He half rose from his squatting to do it. A marvellous gesture! I distinctly saw the suggestion of buying vanish in the direction of the engineers' quarters!

"*Nay, nay!* No buy! S'pose you goin' in de bazaar an' you see dat real Cashmiri shawl. . . . How much you t'ink for very cheap?" A purely hypothetical question, I thought. The Hadji had a far-away look in his eyes. He was indeed interested in a circling bramleykite who had settled the crows' argument by taking the rat in his claws and flying off.

Off-hand. "Oh! two 'dibs,'" I said.

Instantly the far-away look vanished from his eyes. Before the few words were quite said, the Hadji had the shawl parcelled, laid on my chair, was busily packing his bundles—preparing to depart!

"But I don't want it," I said. "That was purely a suppositious case! I don't want it at all; even at two rupees!"

The Hadji looked at me reproachfully.

"*Arre*, *Sahib!* I no saavy dat talkin'. You say two 'dib'! You' word! You' gent-lee-man

word ! I lose on dat, but I give you for two rupee ! I wantin' you' money ! You very lucky gent-lee-man, I see"—tapping his forehead—" you bring me luck. I sell blenty t'ings now ! "

" But, hang it all, it was only a question ! "

" *Arre, nay, Sahib !* You give you' word ! Two rupee, you say ! Gent-lee-man word ! "

" T' h'—pot with you and your gentleman word, ye jammed old fraud ! "

The quartermaster had come over, and was waiting for orders.

The Hadji cast an entreating glance at me. In great mental distress he packed his bundles and prodded the purring boy. By despairing mien and mute gesture, he intimated that his faith was gone—that honour was a sham—that this perfidious world is no place for a simple-hearted Hadji !

" No gent-lee-man word," he sobbed, as he went away !

That was three days ago.

On Sunday afternoon he slipped aboard to see if I had come by my honour again, and sat, in full view, outside my room door, for a matter of an hour. Since then I have ' gone to live with him ' (as the Arabs say). As I pass about my duties, I am conscious of his close regard. His entreating eyes are turned on me from under the arches of a dock crane. There he squats all day. Beside him, the

purring, sleeping boy purrs and sleeps over the large flat basket, and, from any distance I can distinguish the 'real' Cashmiri shawl, as it lies, placed handily on top of the brasswork bundle. I see the Hadji when I am at mess, peering into the cabin, over the shoulder of the punkah boy. He is doubtless anxious to know if I can take my food. I can only see his head and shoulders from my seat, but I feel sure that the 'real' Cashmiri shawl hangs in graceful folds over his arm. Last night I dreamt of a red-bearded Hadji, of 'real' Cashmiri shawls, of a small coolie boy, who purred (that would be my fan) in his sleep.

It is becoming intolerable !

Something will have to be done !

There are two courses of action open to me. One is—to kick the Hadji, together with his 'tassa' silks, em-broider' 'tea-cloth, mantle barder, cus'in cover,' etc., his small coolie boy, and his large flat basket, into the middle of the Dock Roadway !

That would be expensive, for the Parsee magistrate, who has the keeping of the King's peace in these parts, is particularly severe on the employment of physical force. I would be fined ten or fifteen rupees, and there would have to be a further payment of 'rupees—five—to complainant, as compensation.'

The other way is more pacific ; it is the course I shall most probably adopt.

I shall pay the Hadji his two rupees and restore his wavered faith in the stability of the Raj—in the sacredness of a ' gent-lee-man word ! '

Besides, I know of a small person at home who would be quite glad of a ' real ' Cashmiri shawl to hap round her dollies—these cold nights !

VIII

DROPPING THE PILOT

WHEN a north gale blows over the estuary of the Mersey and raises a tumbling sea across the tide the outward pilots have to travel far before they can be put ashore. In ordinary weather they are taken off the outward-bound steamers by a pilot-boat stationed outside the channel, but in a northerly gale the sea runs over-high for boat service, and the pilot steamer has enough to do to keep her station and to direct the inward-bound vessels. Down the coast there is no shelter to be had, for North Wales is open to the wind, and the long rollers, crashing into shoal water, set up such a sea that even the most venturesome would hardly care to put off in it. Holyhead harbour is white-lashed by the whip of the wind, and the tide race round the South Stack makes Penrhos Bay an awkward landing; from Formby to the Stack there is no bulwark to the north wind, and so, the gale continuing, the pilots are carried down channel and are put ashore at that

port of shelter that requires the least divergence from the progress of a voyage. For south and west bound vessels Dunmore Bay, on the south-east coast of Ireland, is most favoured. It is no great distance from the track to Finisterre, and the local pilots and fishermen are ever on the lookout for the good north wind that blows a badly-needed sovereign to their pockets with every Mersey pilot that they put on the beach. When the wind comes strong over Killea on the Hill, the sea folk of Dunmore are early astir, counting the tides and watching for the distant smoke, south away, that tells of a steamer rounding the Coningbeg lightship.

On a blustering day we go to sea from the Mersey. The north cone is dangling from the signal staff at New Brighton, and our Pilot, seeing it, feels in his pockets to discover how funds stand, and wishes he had brought more travelling comforts than a hard hat and an oilskin coat. "I'll be two, mebbe three, days away," says he to the Captain. "The wind's strong north outside, and none of our boats will take me off on this side of the channel. Ye'll have to carry me on, Captain—on to Dunmore or Milford!" The Captain, ill-pleased at the prospect of a halt, however short, in his voyage, hopes that there may be a shift of wind before Holyhead is reached, but the Pilot, glancing to the Formby shore, where everything stands out distinct in the clear north

wind, shakes his head weatherwise. A philosopher of sorts, like all who own the wind and tide for master, he goes about the setting of his course, the ordering of the helm, and gives no further thought to the matter ; a day or two from home is no great matter, though a hard hat and an oilskin coat may be a rather meagre outfit.

It is a Saturday, and we are a goodly company of south-bound ships ; all sorts, all sizes, plunging down the channel, unleashed on our errands, a convoy of sheering hulls lifting to the wind and sea, with a cloud of whirling smoke-wrack blown low on the water. Out here it is blowing a moderate gale, and the lightships are making rough weather of it, labouring uneasily with the wind athwart the tide. A large barque, towing in, is flying signals for a pilot, but the pilot-boat is unable to 'board her' and steams slowly ahead with a message at the masthead — 'Steer after me into smooth water.' In this we read that they can do us no service, so we steer round the Bar Lightship and shape a course for Holyhead. On the coast of Anglesey we meet the pilot-boat of the outer station. She is weathering out the gale in the open, and answers our signals with a curt U.V.—'Too much sea !' That settles it, and, his term of office at an end, the Pilot goes below, assured that it will be on Ireland he will set foot.

Through the night we run down by the Irish banks, and daybreak finds us rounding the Tuskar Light, bearing up for Dunmore Bay. The wind has lessened, and is veering uncertainly. The sky shows promise of westerly winds, and a long, even swell is setting into the bay ; we must make haste to land our man and get well away on our passage across the Bay of Biscay before a sou'west wind rouses the sea against us. We are early on the tide, and the old Hook Tower is close to before a boat puts off. An ancient-cutter she is, yawing wildly down the wind and bruising the water before her in the fashion of a stout old-timer. Near by she lies to and puts a small dinghy in the water ; three men pull towards us. The Mersey Pilot is ready for the road and there looks to be little to detain us, but the boatmen have their little axe to grind, and one boards us to see what can be done. He goes on the bridge with cap in hand.

"Marnin', Captin'," says he, "It's early ye are from Liverpool. Sure, ye must hev a foine ship an' a fast, bedad !" He looks about, admiring. After such a compliment the Captain can do no less than offer him some creature comfort. "That's th' stuff, now," smacking his lips ; "devil a better ! Captin' ! Yez haven't a few faddoms ov two-inch t' make a pake halliards for th' ould boat. Sure it's ould worn-out junk they are wid sarvin' thim

Liverpool pilots ? ” Two-inch is an out-size on a modern steamer, and none is forthcoming. “ Well, thin. Could yez giv’ us a lick o’ paint, now ? Jest a lick, d’ye moind, an’ a brush an’ a pat. Sure, it’s ages since she had a touch av it, an’ her ould sames gapin’ an’ all ! ” In this he is more successful, and some paint is put into the boat. His further requests meet with some return, and at last, reluctantly, he goes aboard his boat, saying something about “ an empty barrel av’ potatoes ! ”

The old cutter wears round and goes off to meet the following steamers, now bearing in, and with a decisive clang of the engine-room telegraph, and an answering tremor of the engines, we lay off a course and proceed on our lawful occasions.

IX

OLD PAOLI

OLD Paoli, the cobbler, is as much a part of the *Quai de Lazaret* as the mooring posts and the hydraulic cranes and the little hut where the *Maitres de Port* sit and talk politics and high finance. No sooner have we passed the swing-bridge inward bound, and the little dock tugs are smoking up furiously to swing us round, than we see old Paoli sitting on his work-box at the breast of the *Quai*—at the exact spot where presently our gangway will be pushed ashore.

He will be one of the first on board—after the Port Doctor has satisfied himself that we are in good health and has ordered the yellow flag to be hauled down. One of the first ; Paoli is growing old and is not now so well able to jostle with the crowd of hotel touts and baggage agents and post-card vendors as once he was.

The old fellow is always courteous, in his broken-English, ship-slang sort of way. He would never

dream of commencing business until he has assured himself, by polite enquiry, that all his potential patrons are in a good state of health and have had a passable voyage. He will come along the star-board alleyway, hat in hand, saying : " How you wass, Mister ? Goot—no ? " which is his way of putting it. This concluded, he will seat himself in plain view and set out all the implements of his trade around him. Paoli is an old campaigner. If it is winter and the *mistral* blowing, he will seek a warm corner out of the wind where the pipes that lead steam to the winches pass : in summer, he looks for a cool place under the shade of the deck-houses. A cut piece of finely-tanned leather will be hung up in a prominent place, so that all who favour him with their repairs can be in no doubt as to the quality of his materials.

As I say, he will seat himself in plain view. It is not Paoli's way to pester one with requests for work ; not unless his subtler mode of canvassing fails : this happens sometimes when the shipfolk are exceeding busy. Being comfortably seated, he will don an extra large pair of spectacles—venerable old Paoli—and, as each of us passes to and fro on our affairs, he will bend forward and examine our footwear with the very closest attention. At the least sign of an irregularity—at even the ' toes in ' tread that shows a listed heel—he will bend still

further forward until his work-box seat is perilously tilted. If one is too busy to heed, there is nothing said : " Shoes mend it, Mister—no ? " is all he will say should he catch your eye. It is a terrible ordeal to pass Paoli without looking to where his keen old eyes are so closely rivetted !

It is not easy to get a quotation from old Paoli. To all enquiries as to a probable cost, he will reply : " What you laike, Mister ? I makem goot job." He has a scale, certainly, but it is largely based on the rank or rating on board held by his customer. When payment has been tendered, he has a way of looking interestedly at one's brass binding—at the distinctive badges that denote authority on board ship.

Work comes, and the old man polishes his big spectacles and examines the job at every possible angle. He passes his hard old hands over points of separation, turns the soles up and taps the leather with a touch that might be a Doctor sounding—then sighs, as though he finds the job will be a difficult one.

Having thus fully and fairly considered the job, Paoli next turns to his famous piece of tanned leather. He slaps it with the flat of his hand, making a great noise (to attract attention, maybe)—and slowly and carefully he cuts a piece. In this, he sets his teeth hard and grunts furiously, to show that his leather is not so easily severed. Between

the slicings with his big cobbler's knife, he will peer over the top of his specs ; he nods approvingly at the toughness of his piece.

It is duly cut to a rough size and placed aside. Now comes the moment of precise and disdainful removal of the damaged sole. Nothing can exceed the scornful emphasis that Paoli applies to all his dealings with it. It is ripped contemptuously from the welt, is held a moment to view between index finger and thumb—the while Paoli's old grey head goes nod, nod, nodding—and is placed carefully where it cannot contaminate the awls and wax-ends and cuttings of new leather that lie at the cobbler's feet. This is if one is watching the progress of the work. But, ah ! Paoli, Paoli ! If no one is about, the discarded sole goes into your box ; after all there is a cutting in it to make up some humble sole.

Then comes the hammering and softening of the hard new piece, and Paoli rises to straighten his back before commencing the long sewing job. He will roll himself a cigarette and look about for a light. I know positively that there is a paper of sulphur matches in his starboard waistcoat pocket, but apparently these constitute his reserve. He comes forward, fingering the brim of his battered felt hat. “ You giv-a de light, pleas', mister.” I know what is coming ; it has happened quarterly for many years now !

“ Dese goot-a matches, mister,” says old Paoli, as he fingers my box. “ No laik-a de Franchai matches.” (Paoli is ‘ Italia - man,’ as he will tell you.) “ Franchai matches no goot ! Franchai tabak no goot ! *Wouff !* ” He spits contemptuously and holds his rough black cigarette out to view. “ Franchai tabak no goot ! India cigar goot ! ” smacking his lips relishingly. Here is a moment’s pause. “ You got-a one India cigar for ol’ Paoli, mister ? ”

X

JEEMS SAHIB

THE last time I had seen Jeems he had been careering wildly all over the lower end of Kelvinhaugh Street in company of a 'crood,' fitters and 'prentices, and they were passing out the last five minutes of the 'meal 'oor' in pursuit of a misshapen mass of paper and string: they called it a ba'. With a whoop (I am afraid a good deal of strong words went with the whoop) they chased it over road and sidewalk, jostled passers-by with quite unnecessary vigour, and finally lifted the ba' with an ill-judged kick into the coal-waggons at the siding. I noticed Jeems because, even after the ba' had been put over the wall and the 'crood' were making for Hutson's, he did some steps on the sidewalk, showing his mates a tricky turn of 'the gem.'

I hardly knew him now. The fierce Indian sun had browned and hardened the once 'peekit' complexion that Jeems's good mother had been so concerned about. In his dingy working overalls

he looked all of a man—in marked contrast to the smug Bengalis and weedy Eurasians who, with him, made up the skilled complement of the Googhly Engineering Works.

A battered pith topee surmounted his curly head, his chest was bared to the cooler airs of the deck alleyway, and the grime and sweat of a hot job in our engine-room had seared his face in greasy furrows. I noticed that none of his assistants showed such signs of being 'hard wrocht.'

"Hullo, Jeems," I said. "I never thought of meeting you out here."

Jeems winked.

His wink said plainly, as only a Clyde 'shop' wink may say it, 'Cod. Ye're therr.'

"I've been oot here this six months," he told me. "I cam' oot second o' a tramp, yin o' Aikmans, the *Borstal*. We hid a bit o' an accident comin' up th' coast, an' I hid tae go intae hospital wi' a bashed airm when we arrived."

"Oh, it's a' richt noo," he said, in answer to my inquiry. "Hit's a' richt, but th' ship sail't afore I got oot o' th' hospital. The agent wis tae hae sent me hame, but I got th' offer o' this joab, an' jist bidet here."

"I hope it's a good one, Jeems," I said.

"Oh, it's no' that bad, man. The pey's guid, but—ach!—ye're awfu' hard wrocht. Oot here it's

different tae whit it is at hame. If ye want a joab dune—aff wi' yer jaiket an' d'it yersel'. . . . That's th' wey oot here—aff comes yer jaiket an' ye be tae be dae'n 't yersel. . . . An' me th' gaffer, tae . . . *Huh!* . . . Them ” (indicating his assistants with a pitying wave of his hand), ‘them ‘nyaffs.’ *Huh!* Thae yins couldnae mak’ saut tae thur purridge at tappin’ five-eicht holes.”

“But surely you’ve plenty of men for the rough work,” I said. “Your job will be to supervise, isn’t it?”

“Ou aye—tae supervise. . . . Therr’s plenty o’ men a’ richt. A’ them therr,” he indicated a group of Bengalis and up-country natives who were hoisting some parts of machinery to the upper platform. “I could hae yin tae cairry ma pipe, an’ anither tae haud ma boax o’ matches; but, man, they’re awfu’ useless critters. It’s no’ like workin’ in a shoap wi’ wiselike men that kens therr wark. Thaase yins is frae th’ jungle—at ten annas th’ day. It’s a guid joab I’ve learnt therr lang’widge. ‘Cod, I don’t know hoo we’d get oan if I wisnae able tae tell them whit I want.”

One of the Eurasians sidled up and asked Jeems a question about the lifting of the shop tools.

“Af coorse. Af coorse,” said Jeems. “Hey—you”—beckoning to a swart Punjabi—“Hey—you. Awa’ doon *nichee*. *Nichee, savvy?* Awa’ doon

nichee, an' *puckerow* that three an' an eicht spanner.
Jilday."

Jeems leaned over the handrail and watched the man go below.

"Hey—you. *Puckerow* wi' yer baith hauns, ye *sooar* ye. . . . 'Cod—" turning to me again—"They'd tak' a fair len' o' us if we didnae ken hoo tae speak thur langwidge."

XI

OFF ST. MICHAEL'S ISLE

ST. MICHAEL'S ISLE, pearl of the Portuguese Crown, stands bold among the lesser Azores in mid-Atlantic. Though full in the track of ships making the southern passage, its only harbour, at Ponta Delgada—a short indent of coast line, fortified by a colossal breakwater—has not, in a trading sense, an important position among seaports. The island, fertile and fruitful as it is, produces no commodity that calls for tonnage to transport ; and for most of the year the moorings lie empty, except for fruit vessels in season, and the colliers who bring fuel from the Welsh fields to be stacked and stored. On the rim of a far horizon ships pass on their way to East and West, and at times haul in sufficiently near to engage the signal station with a string of flags. That is in the fine weather—in the long stretch from March to October ; but in the winter months, when the great west wind sets out to furrow the breadth of the Atlantic, and huge seas sweep un-

checked from Baltimore to the Bay, then St. Michael's becomes a harbour indeed, a haven of high importance, a port that ships may run to for fresh supplies of fuel to continue the struggle against wind and sea.

At Algiers we had coaled for the westward, but after passing through the Straits of Gibraltar we met with bad weather, worsening daily, and so had to bear up for St. Michael's to replace the coal that we had expended in our effort to make westing. " Pound-notes going up the funnel," said our canny captain, as he ruefully measured the hard-won inches on the chart. " There'll be a reckoning for this, I'm thinking ; for owners aye count the wind on the credit side of their ledgers ! " Twelve days from Gibralter we arrived off St. Michael's and signalled for a pilot, but our flags were answered by ' urgent hoists ' from three points of eminence : ' Do not attempt to make the harbour ! ' Steaming close inshore we saw reason for the bolted door. The harbour was full, chock full, of shipping. Behind the massive breakwater there was not clear water enough to turn a ferry. There was nothing left for it but to keep the sea ; and as night fell we found ourselves, in company with many other vessels in similar strait, marking time off the harbour. All night the glare of working lights showed us that they were working ' double tides '

inside to clear the port. Before daybreak a large vessel came out and turned away west, and we felt sure of one clear berth when day came.

Dawn broke, grey and lurid at the zenith, on a high gale and heavy sea. Eager for the vacant berth the vessels lay crowded at the harbour mouth; there was no sign of a pilot awaiting, and 'Do not attempt' still fluttered at the Port Captain's flag-staff. On many ships signals were hoisted showing stress of circumstance: 'Short of coal,' 'Am unable to keep at sea,' 'Have sustained serious damage,' among others. At last, when nearly noon, the flags at the harbour staff were lowered, a further order hoisted—'Vessel bearing S.S.E. to enter!' In the smooth water at the end of the breakwater a pilot-boat appeared showing a flag. The compasses of the entire fleet of us must have experienced a remarkable magnetic wave during the night, for immediately the signal was hoisted every captain considered his vessel to bear south-south-east, and a combined rush was made for the flag-boat, at sight of which the pilot turned short round and put back under a lash of oars. The rush continued; there were needy men and desperate among us. On every flagstaff ashore the now familiar 'Do not attempt' went madly to the peak, but the captains put a Nelson eye to their glasses, each trying, by trick of seamanship, to steam into the best position.

Whistles sounded out, indicating a confusion of steering orders; propellers churned and threshed in furious foam as big ships came violently astern to back out of the press. A shapely French liner worked cleverly into the inshore berth, but before her Captain could turn his advantage to account a North-country tramp backed close across his bows and, shooting ahead, was soon inside the break-water, bellowing loudly for a pilot. Then only did the over-eager captains recover sanity, to drop warily out of the close engagement and, mopping a heated brow, to wonder “what the devil the other fellows meant!” Then to sea again,—to mark time until another berth fell vacant. Lifting uneasily to the long Atlantic seas,—to drive headlong to the trough—the screw racing horribly in mid-air as her stern cast high, we spent our day in dire discomfort. Hourly new arrivals joined us. Liners driven from their proper courses, colliers with the fuel that we so sorely needed, high traders in crazy ballasted trim, a Cardiff tramp with a dismasted barque in tow. A great gale!

Through the night the ships came out of port, their coal aboard. Four—five—six—six we counted, as, showing steaming lights, they rounded the break-water and drove anew to the westward. We had to await daylight to enter—with such a press of shipping the pilots would take no risks. At first

grey break, the movement began, the same struggle for place at the crowded harbour mouth ; but the Port Captain had taken counsel through the night, and, as the light grew, we saw signals at the harbour staff that set order out of the chaos of moving ships. ' Vessel whose number follows to enter '—a signal there could be no mistaking. First the lame duck, the dismasted barque, was taken in, and we had no grievance as we watched her sheer and falter in the wake of her gallant salvor. Next the Frenchman, bowing gracefully to the long swell, followed on. Then, in line and order to the sixth ship, we sheered under the breakwater, to be hurriedly turned and moored anigh the coal stacks.

To our captain's demands the Port Authority shrugged a gold-laced shoulder. " No posseeble, Capitan," he said. " Ve are very sorrow, but de order has come from Lisboa. Ve can onlee give you coal to sufficient de nearest port, until dese coal ships come in. You vill coal for de Bermudas, Capitan." Thus was the law laid down, and we had no course but to take our allowance, and that as speedily as the over-worked, toil-worn carriers could put it aboard. Nor were we allowed to linger, for as soon as the last basket was emptied and the weights checked the pilot was shouting lustily—" Heaf 'way, forrad, sare ! " Threading a careful course among the closely moored vessels, we put to sea again.

The fleet of waiting ships in the offing seemed scarce diminished, and trails of smoke wrack to the nor'ard marked others on the way.

The wind had veered to sou'-west, still blowing strong. As we cleared the Islands a large barque swept up from the south, with yards squared and full tops'ls distent to the wind. She crossed our bows, running swiftly for the Channel.

"There she goes," said our Captain, enthusiastic. "Egad!" (thinking of our sixty hours' detention and coal at 8 milreis the ton) "there's something to be said for square sail yet!"

XII

AT BAZAAR

I HAD stopped for a moment at Irani's tobacco-shop in the Bazaar, only for a moment, no more, while I laid an information against the last box of Burma cheroots that he had supplied. There was a question about the brand, and Irani went into the shop to see about it. During the short interval that he was away I was flanked and surrounded by an army of hangers-on: hangers-on indeed, for they swarmed on the wheels and steps of my gharry—one sat on the roadway in front of the horse so that escape was difficult. The near side was taken up by market touts; the off by a horde of beggars. On the left I was offered tempting bargains in silks, brassware, bootlaces, walking-sticks; on the right, open sores were laid bare to my eyes, a blind man was thrust forward, muttering texts from the Koran, an armless creature had his *kumis* raised to show that there was no deception. An aged dame whose long skinny fingers touched

my boots in reverence and naked toddling children joined pipingly in the call for alms. On one point they were all agreed—that I was a *Burra Sahib* of the utmost description—that I was rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Doubtless, to them I was. The half-burned weed in my hand (Mrs. Middleton's, at half an anna per each) represented a sum that would have given a meal to one at least.

All had suggestions. This way I had to buy a supply of bootlaces and walking-sticks; that way I was to apportion a certain amount of backsheesh, and all would be well.

Then the rival parties quarrelled. The 'merchants' at my left asked the other beggars, "Could they not go away and allow business to go on." The afflicted ones laughed scornfully (God! What laughter!) and renewed their clamour. A buxom wench, with a puny baby hanging like a leech to her, climbed up at the back of the gharry and made hollow sounds at my ear—to prove that her statement about want of food was right. The armless creature bumped its head on the step in salutation. The old blind man—most pathetic of all—swayed from side to side droning something about Allah and the great virtue of charity.

I was in a bad position. The 'merchants' I could deal with. On them I exhausted the 'flowers' of my scanty knowledge of the vernacular, with

some success. After barking out a phrase or two (that I had learned of a foreman stevedore) I saw the walking-stick *wallah* wince and move off. The silk man was dismissed by an allusion to his immediate forebears. With the beggars it was different. I knew that it was 'up to me,' as an alleged *Sahib*, to issue largesse, but I had the feeling that a move of my hand towards my pocket would be telegraphed far and near, that the reserve forces of the beggar army would come up at the double. Already their numbers were augmented; two boys having but three arms and a leg between them were pushing forward, exalting me—I was now *Huzoor*, no less! At this juncture Irani's shopman came to my rescue. Stick in hand he scattered the group of 'merchants.' I noticed that (though menace there was) he never struck out at the beggars. After waving his stick and stamping feet—to no effect—he suggested that I should apportion a small sum. This I did. Nine annas and seven pice divided among the more sorry cases. The stout wench got nothing. I had the idea that her broken English was too cleverly professional. Then Irani came, and, my business settled, I drove off.

Clop . . . cloppety . . . clop we went down the Hornby Road. The worn Arab between the shafts had a shoe loose, and the *gharry wallah* was for taking no risks. At a cross roads there was a block

of traffic, and, while waiting, I was conscious of hurried breathing behind the hood. The buxom wench—I think it was the same one—had left her baby and was keenly in chase. We moved on. She ran behind, grasping the back axle.

“O, werry good *Captan Sahib* (*Huh! Huh!*). Me werry poor beggar, *Sahib* (*Huh! Huh!*). . . . Me no *mangee* (*Huh! Huh!*). . . . No rice (*Huh!*). . . .” With her disengaged hand she beat a tatoo on the place where rice does most good. . . . “You give two anna, *Sahib* (*Huh! Huh! Huh!*). . . . Only two anna, Sa! (*Huh!*)”

We were turning into the Fort. It was the time of the evening drive. Gharries and motors went by, and I was hotly conscious of amused regard.

“No *mangee*, *Sahib* (*Huh! Huh!*). . . . No one pice, werry good (*Huh! Huh!*), werry good *Captan Sahib.*”

I stared stolidly ahead, found apparent interest in the high buildings of the Fort, in the homeward thronging crowds on the sidewalk. In a few minutes I would be at Greens, and the *durwan* there would see to it that I was no further molested.

She was running easily behind. Then, suddenly,—the patter of her feet ceased. Ah! She had given up. . . . I was sure she was an impostor. No starveling could run like that. The baby too! That would be a stock property.

At Greens I paid my gharry off. There was the usual post-settlement demanded, and, in the midst of a firm refusal, I was interrupted—"Me poor beggar, *Sahib*. . . . No *mangee*, no——" Grinning candidly as an old acquaintance, the beggar wench was there at my elbow. She must have ridden on the back axle!

"Two anna. . . . You give two anna, worry good *Captan Sahib*. . . . Me worry poor beggar."

I gave in.

Two annas! She said something about my being her father and her mother, salaamed, and made off.

I wonder if Irani's shopman put her on to follow me?

Anyway, I shall go no more to Bazaar to complain about his cheroots. I often wondered why he has his shop there, when his business is all with sailor-folk. Now I think I know.

XIII

THE HARVEST OF THE NORTH

EARLY in November the whalers come home. The binding ice has then raised an impenetrable barrier in the North ; so, ' clean ' ship or ' full ' ship, they must return to snug quarters, their enterprise concluded for the season. Six months have gone since Dundee saw them set out, ' braw lads and hardy,' and news of their ' faring ' has been rumoured and scant. When autumn gives place to winter, anxious eyes are cast on the shipping columns for news of the adventurers. The ships' owners are not the least eager, for there are no market returns to quote the progress of their investment, and even one whale may mean all the difference between profit and loss. The relatives of the crews, too, have their interest in the venture, and ' clean ' ships (ships, that is, that have made no catch) mean a winter of poverty and hardship. The whale ships, although they may not have seen one another since clearing the Tay, generally arrive together within

a few days. Rumours of their presence on the coast get about. Fishermen report having seen them anchored, 'wind-bound' in some remote West Highland bay, or trawlers running in with their fish speak of having seen square sail to the nor'ard. Then glad hearts in Dundee read of their arrival; a bare, brief paragraph enough, but a wealth of incident to them. 'Lerwick, Nov. —, Dundee whaler *Diana* has put in; all well. She has three whales. Spoke *Eclipse* with a catch of four on Aug. 18.' A reassuring report to begin with, and one that augurs well for the rest of the fleet!

Fast following come reports of other arrivals at northern harbours, but the wind has not veered fair for the passage to Dundee, and the whalebone will not suffer for the keeping. There they lie until the wind goes nor'ard of east, and ensures them a clean run to the Tay bar. Although they are auxiliary vessels, having steam at command, they hoard their slender remainder of coal for pilotage waters, and finish their passage under sail. They clear the Pentland Firth and stand on past Buchan Ness for the Bell Rock. On this, the last lap of the voyage, the toil and hardship of the long, darkless days are forgotten, and the crew, light of heart, have eyes for nothing but the familiar landmarks, the sentinels of home. In anticipation of his pay-day the steersman may wear a preoccupied

look that consorts ill with his important post, and to the Mate's sharp demand, "How's her head?" may make the startling answer, "Forty-five pounds, seventeen, sir!" In due course they reach the bar, and steaming bravely up the broad estuary of the Tay, with flags apeak, they cast anchor in their home waters with a gallant cheer, boasting of their fortunes, or maybe a muttered malediction on an unprofitable venture. When the tide serves they weigh anchor and pass into dock, with half the longshoremen of Dundee on the pierhead to see them safely in. No show vessels these, with glitter of brass and glint of polished teak to throw back the waning beams of the November sun, but gallant, seaman-like barques, with the scars of the Arctic on their sturdy sides. The first in is greeted with a popular ovation, for she has three whales aboard, and there is beer in that for every dockside loafer. She warps into dock amid a babel of cries and salutations. Jest and counter-jest are bandied about, and domestic items of months back are shouted from the housetops. A woman on the quayside shouts, "Is that you, Jock. Man, but ye've grown an awfu' whusker!" The subject of her regard waves a grimy hand. "Ay, an' it's me, an' mair nor ma whusker, ah've grow'd a ruddy thirst, ma lass! Ha'e ye onything i' th' bottle?" A tall-hatted gentleman of important demeanour

(he probably has an interest in the ship) is even made the object of an impertinent query, for this is the day when 'sailor's license' is admitted. "Haw, Mister Mac——, ha'e ye gotten intil th' Toon Coouncil yet?" shouts a weazened harpooner, and the important gentleman looks annoyed. Some one in the crowd cries, "De'il a bit o' in, he's ower thrang wi' th' Skule Brod!" A boisterous guffaw greets this sally, and the humour of the crowd becomes more pert and personal. Amid all this rough and rude, though hearty, expression of high spirits there are pathetic things: eyes may be seeking in vain for familiar figures and kent faces, and ears may hearken eagerly for a loved voice. A stalwart young sailorman leans over the to'gallant rail, face drawn and ghastly, listening to ill-news from a sympathetic friend. ". . . Puir Jean, she wisna' ower strong . . . a fortnicht come We'ds'day . . . an' yer mither's gotten the wean; hit's daein' gey an' weel . . . a braw bairn. . . ." The moving ship carries him beyond earshot, but he still leans over the rail, unmindful of the cries of his shipmates and the sharp orders of the Mate; alone with his misery.

At the far end of King William Dock ropes are run out, and the ship is made fast to the quay wall. With the fastening of the moorings the voyage is over and the crew are at liberty. Their friends on

the quayside do not wait for a gangway to be put out, but clamber aboard over the rail, and the whaler's decks are soon crowded as they have never been since she last set out. Friends and relatives greet the whalemén openly, being free of the ship, and the 'emblem of amity,' the humble 'hauf-mutchkin,' passes from hand to hand, and never travels far. Others there are to meet the wanderers whose movements are less open ; keen-eyed persons slink furtively down the fo'cas'le scuttle, taking advantage of the preoccupation of the ship's officers. They are 'share-discounters,' and though undoubtedly useful to sailormén, their methods are not looked upon favourably by those in authority. Tailors' runners and boarding masters follow in their wake, for they, too, have a fear of the Merchant Shipping Act, which provides for their punishment if they board a ship within a certain number of hours of her arrival. Cabs rattle down over the cobblestones on the quay and range themselves at the gangway. They have deserted the neighbourhood of the Exchange on hearing word of the whaler's arrival. The Captain comes ashore, accompanied by the tall-hatted gentleman, who has evidently forgotten his annoyance in the sense of assured prosperity which he gathers from the Captain's report. In groups and parties the crew leave the ship, talking loudly and boisterously, impatient of

the occasional restraining hand of their womenfolk. A police watchman takes charge of the deserted ship and paces the deck in a business-like manner. Some captive bears, in hutches on deck, start howling lugubriously for the meal which has been overlooked. The watchman finds some scraps in the galley, throws them a bite, and silence is over the ship. Bustle and movement being absent, one notices the dreadful stench that pervades her, though one reflects that she would have a sorry welcome without it. Dirt and grime and rust, litter and stench, coal-tar within and without, she carries a goodly share of the harvest of the North within her sturdy timbers.

XIV

LA CANTINIÈRE

WHEN daylight comes there is no one astir on the *Quai du Lazaret*: save fisher-folk and the pilots, the Marseillais lie long abed. Only the ship-watch sees the first rosy flush on the distant hills of La Couronne and marks the sun's first alighting on the city—a glint of gold where his pilot rays strike on the Christ on the pinnacle of Notre Dame de la Garde.

At five, the armed Customs officer comes out on the open quay, stretching lustily, and saying “*Ah—la, la*” between his yawns. Soon he is joined by another watcher of the night—the Garde Sanitaire, whose duty it is to see that no plague germs are landed surreptitiously from the East Indiaman at the Quai. The two half-slept *Gardiens* seat themselves on soft bales of silk cuttings, say “*Ah—la, la*” together, and exchange yawns in that mysterious sympathy that has puzzled scientists and others since yawns were.

So—till six—when Madame Bartelmy comes by the dockhead and sets her business in order for the day. Unlocking, she sets down the hinged flaps of her *buvette ambulante*, a stall arrangement for the sale of drinks, that stands chained to the wall during the night,—and the quiet of the dockside is broken by a merry clink of the glasses she sets out in polished array.

“*Bonjour, Madame! Madame Bartelmy, bonjour!*” The Gardes raise their *képis* in courteous salute.

“*Bonjour, Messieurs,*” says Madame, and she pours out a liberal ‘morning’ for her early customers.

Madame is of about fifty, but as yet no sign of grey is permitted to appear in her neatly coiffured hair. Wrinkles—but few. The *grande secret* is hers, and her pleasant face shows little trace of care. To the waist she is trim, in a close-fitting bodice, and from there voluminous skirts bunch out—fold upon fold—like crinoline almost. She wears a blue apron at her work, and from a bulging pocket peeps a neatly folded *Petit Marseillais*.

A young boy assistant joins her at the stall, carrying a large basket of fine French bread in long sticks, hard dry sausages, round fresh grapes—and a plentiful supply of coloured paper to take the place of plates in the hands of *Messieurs les ouvriers*. Then the workmen come—not sullenly hurrying

to heel, but lounging down the dockside in parties of two and four, calling greetings to one another, shaking hands—right hand and left. It is *bonjour*, indeed, and Madame's quick hands are taxed by rapid service as the men purchase their breakfast—a foot or so of the fine bread, a sausage of unknown ingredients—and after, a glass of wine to send all home. Then comes a lighting of cigarettes with vile sulphur matches that need a minute's shielding in the hollowed hands before anything can be done.

Tout à l'heure, a cracked bell is set a-dinning, and the men go to work.

Now, a short rest for Madame while the small boy polishes the glasses anew. The *Petit Marseillais* is carefully unfolded, and after the major points of news have been scanned, Madame turns to the enthralling serial, '*Vertige d'amour*.' There are six quarter columns of concentrated emotion, but Madame is a quick reader and *la suite à demain* may be reached before the first of the carters comes in, leading his line of five stout horses and a long empty cart.

Clattering, he goes up the dock to a loading-stand, sets his horses at ease, and returns to the *Buvette* for his bread and wine. Others come in and join him at the bar, cracking a jest with Madame or talking of the state of the roads. One by one the long carts are loaded up, and the carters

set off for their oil mills with a great cracking of whips.

The sun grows strong, having risen high of the *Magasins du Port*, and Madame spreads a gaily striped awning over her stall. The official hour has now come. All the officials of the Quai and *les Docks* pass down on their way to their affairs. Baggy-trousered *Douaniers*, *Sanitaires* (long-nosed fellows, these), *Maîtres du Port*, *Pilotes*—all have to be quickly served, and the big tumbler on the shelf, that serves as the till, grows brown with the sous that Madame, (cleverly examining without attracting undue notice), tosses carelessly in.

Now business slackens. The officials are sauntering leisurely to their desks. All the men are at work, and even a Dago stevedore would hardly think of a *sortie* so soon after starting. But there are ways for those whom hasty rising or a block at the bridges has delayed beyond the point of starting.

"*Allez, Marcel—Va-t'en,*" says Madame, and the small boy takes up a basket in which bottles are arranged: *cognac* for the rich, *ordinaire* for the thrifty, *coupe* for *les pauvres*. A bucket of clean water and a cloth for the glasses completes the equipment, and Marcel climbs up the long gangway leading to the ship and makes his way to the cargo hatches, shouting as he goes, "*Qui veut boire? Qui veut boire, après?*"

XV

COASTING DAYS

FOR long voyages—foreign away—sail-power still survives in a few ill-found, undermanned vessels, whose stunted spars and feeble spread of canvas are but pathetic relics of a stately fleet. The demands of the day have called for a greater carrying capacity and quicker transport. Steam, the mighty revolutionary, has ousted the square rigger from nearly every sea route, and the spectacle of lofty ships, still staunch and seaworthy, lying idly at their rusty moorings, is to be seen at every port in the Kingdom.

In home waters the coasting trade, though now largely exploited by an ever-increasing fleet of steamers, has still a place and purpose for the smaller sailing vessels, and never a wind blows east or west outside the citadels of commerce, but there are sailing craft to set out or put in—coasters, humble units of the great fleet that flies the Red Ensign.

They are vessels of no great burthen, these seaworthy little ships that set about bravely at vantage of the unbought wind. Most are of a light draught of water, that they may the more readily cross the shallow bars of minor seaports and pick up cargo that the deeper steamers could not venture in for. They are of many rigs—barques, brigantines, brigs, dandys—but the most favoured is that of topsail schooner, a fine rig for a small crew—a handy sail plan. ‘Fore and aft’ to lie close when winds are contrary, and a square topsail to spread to a favouring breeze. Among them are many ancient hulls—stout old wooden walls that have stood the stress of wind and weather for nigh on half a century. Built in some snug harbour, away from the feverish haste and bustle (and ‘scamped’ labours) of the great shipbuilding centres, they have good workmanship in them—the finer touches of the shipwright’s art that few owners will pay for in these cut-throat days; many have lines and finish that would discredit no lordly brewer on a yachting trip.

Taking such cargoes as the bustling steam coasters despise (and these grow less and less as the years go on), they strive to earn a livelihood if not a competence for those who own and man them. In them, alone of all the merchant service, there is no place for the foreign seaman, indeed, the little

to be made would offer no inducement to bring Hans Dans and Yon Smit from the steam-heated fore-castle of a steamer.

Noting the port of registry on the stern of a coaster, it may be taken that the crew are natives of that part of the country—family ships as like as not, with a stout captain who may also be the owner, and his sons and nephews to bear hand at sheet and halyard, and learn to sail the vessel when the old man has gone the long road. Although nothing great at the science of navigation, the men who sail the coasters are sterling seamen, never at a loss for a sure course in home waters, ready of hand and eye for the many dangers to be met and overcome—peril of shoal and sandbank, tempest, tide-race, and, greatest of all, the dank clammy fog-wraiths that cloud the seaman's master-sense when he has direst need of a clear outlook.

Coasters are run on lines of economy, as needs must when freights are low and competition close. Every breath of wind is made to serve a passage, and when a port is made (difficult of entry and requiring a steam escort for the winding channels), it is nothing uncommon for the coaster to drop anchor at the bar and await the coming of some inward-bound neighbour, so that a better bargain may be struck with the tugman. A tide or more on the passage is no great matter, but an

outlay of hard cash has to be considered with care.

Many quaint, old sea-customs are only kept from oblivion by their observance in the schooners; weekly payment is made at the capstan-head, and where the old man is not too Welsh, there may be a 'blessing' when a cargo has been wound up from the dusty hold. It is the custom to paint in a blue streak on the vessel's side as a sign of mourning in the owner's family. These are odd survivals in the days of shipping offices—when the old man's blessing is more likely to be a curse;—and who would go into mourning for a limited liability company?

Wales is the great centre for coasting craft: from Carnarvon and Beaumaris to Milford in the South. Up the Bristol Channel, they are more for steamers—gaunt, ugly vessels, stark and bare as only a Welsh steam-collier can be,—but away from the grimy coal-fields, they build shapely hulls, fit them with straight spars and stout wings of well-sewn canvas, and set them off to harness the Channel winds and bear a burthen from port to port.

In their names, the good old traditions of sea-life are kept in mind. '*Hogwash*' and '*Buglup*' may do very well for a steam-carrier—a monster of mechanics and downright utility,—but for a stately little craft that charms the sailor's eye, '*Maid of Llangelly*,' '*Sarah*,' '*Ann*,' and '*Margaret*,' or '*Good*

Success are the right kind of names, and, as a sailor tells you, there is a very great deal in having the right name for your ship. Who, for instance, would do his best for a boat called the '*Sheughbog*'? Had she been a '*Marian*' or a '*Rose Ann*' her five men might not have left her a standing wreck on the Carnarvonshire coast. Who knows what they might have done to save her, if they had a memory of a slim maid, in Sunday best, cheering her namesake as she left the ways. But '*Sheughbog*'! *Ugh!* A vessel with a name like that has no right to be afloat on clean salt water.

In summer-time, when God's good daylight is long with us, it is a pleasant life aboard the sailing coaster. Setting off with flowing sheet down the river reaches in the first grey flush of an early dawn, reaching out to sea and the fresh salt breeze, slipping along by peak and headland, marking the sights of the Channel—the liners that go racing by on their express, broad-bowed tramps lurching at modest gait, white-winged yachts leaning to the breeze a-pleasuring no better than we. And when the wind heads and we have to beat round a stubborn point of land, we have a clear view of the countryside as we tack close inshore to take advantage of a tricky turn of tide, known only to the coasting skipper: then about again—and a clear wind course out to sea, with the land lying distant on the weather

quarter. A voyage of a day or days, and then to some snug anchorage or a berth at some village quay, and a clean ordered country tavern at hand to refresh in after the day's work at the cargo is over and the last cart has rumbled up the lanes.

A goodly living, a fine life, the coasters'—in the summer! It is a different way of things in the winter months when the reefs stand in the mains'l week in and out. Long stormy voyages and an all too brief stay in port to recover the time we spend through stress of weather: out on an open sea; wet, miserable, disheartened, aching of limbs with the long struggle against adverse winds, sore at wrists and neckband with the constant chafe of sodden oilskins. Wind and rain and frost and snow, with a bitter channel sea upreared against us! A hard life!

It is well for us that the sailor's thoughts do not readily recur to the bitter times, that he has little liking to dwell on the memories of heavy weather, the crash of hurtling seas, the icy whiplash of the wind-blown spray: but he thinks rather of the fine weather—of days of calm, drifting lazily by the land, and harbour lights starting up to view when the light has died from a tranquil evening sky.

XVI

THE MERCHANTS' CUP

I

'FATTY' REID burst into the half-deck with a whoop of exultation. "Come out, boys," he yelled. "Come out and see what luck! The *James Flint* comin' down the river, loaded and ready for sea! Who-oo! What price the *Hilda* now for the Merchants' Cup?"

"Oh, come off," said big Jones. "Come off with your Merchants' Cup. Th' *James Flint*'s a sure thing, and she wasn't more than half-loaded when we were up at Crockett on Sunday!"

"Well, there she comes anyway! *James Flint*, sure enough! Gracie's house-flag up, and the Stars and Stripes!"

We hustled on deck and looked over by the Sacramento's mouth. 'Fatty' was right. A big barque was towing down beyond San Pedro. The *James Flint*! Nothing else in 'Frisco harbour had spars like hers; no ship was as trim and clean as

the big Yankee clipper that Bully Nathan commanded. The sails were all aloft, the boats aboard. She was ready to put to sea.

Our cries brought the captain and mate on deck, and the sight of the outward-bounder made old man Burke's face beam like a nor'west moon.

"A chance for ye now, byes," he shouted. "An open race, bedad! Ye've nothin' t' be afraid of if th' *James Flint* goes t' sea by Saturday!"

Great was our joy at the prospect of the Yankee's sailing. The 'Frisco Merchants' Cup was to be rowed for on Saturday. It was a mile-and-half race for ships' boats, and three wins held the Cup for good. Twice, on previous years, the *Hilda's* trim gig had shot over the line—a handsome winner. If we won again, the Cup was ours for keeps! But there were strong opponents to be met this time. The *James Flint* was the most formidable. It was open word that Bully Nathan was keen on winning the trophy. Every one knew that he had deliberately sought out boatmen when the whalers came in from the north. Those who had seen the Yankee's crew at work in their snaky carvel-built boat said that no one else was in it. What chance had we boys in our clinker-built against the thews and sinews of trained whalers? It was no wonder that we slapped our thighs at the prospect of a more open race.

Still, even with the Yankee gone, there were others in the running. There was the *Rhondda* that held the Cup for the year, having won when we were somewhere off the Horn; then the *Hedwig Rickmers*—a Bremen four-master—which had not before competed, but whose green-painted gig was out for practice morning and night. We felt easy about the *Rhonddas* (for had we not, time and again, shown them our stern on the long pull from Green St. to the outer anchorage?), but the Germans were different. Try as we might, we could never pull off a spurt with them. No one knew for certain what they could do, only old Schenke, their skipper, and he held his tongue wisely.

The *James Flint* came round the bend, and our eager eyes followed her as she steered after the tug. She was making for the outer anchorage, where the laden ships lie in readiness for a good start off.

"Th' wind's 'bout west outside," said Jones. "A 'dead muzzler'! She'll not put t' sea to-night, even if she has all her 'crowd' aboard."

"No, worse luck! Mebbe she'll lie over till Saturday after all. They say Bully's dead set on getting th' Cup. He might hang back. . . . Some excuse—short-handed or something!" Gregson was the one for 'croaking.'

"No hands?" said Fatty. "Huh! How could he be short-handed when everybody knows that

Daly's boardin'-house is chock-full of fightin' Dutchmen? No, no! It'll be the sack for Mister Bully B. Nathan if he lets a capful o' fair wind go by and his anchor down. Gracie's agents 'll watch that!"

"Well! He's here for th' night, anyway. . . . There goes her mudhook!"

We watched her great anchor go hurtling from the bows and heard the roar of chain cable as she paid out and swung round to the tide.

"Come roun', yo' boys dere! Yo' doan' want no tea, eh?" The nigger cook, beating tattoo on a saucepan lid, called us back to affairs of the moment, and we sat down to our scanty meal in high spirits, talking—all at one time—of our chances of the Cup.

The *Hilda* had been three months at San Francisco, waiting for the wheat crop and a profitable charter. We had come up from Australia, and most of our crew, having little wages due to them, had deserted soon after our arrival. Only we apprentices and the sail-maker remained, and we had work enough to set our muscles up in the heavy harbour jobs. Trimming coal and shovelling ballast may not be scientific training, but it is grand work for the back and shoulders.

We were in good trim for rowing. The old man had given us every opportunity, and nothing he could do was wanting to make us fit. Day and

daily we had set our stroke up by the long pull from the anchorage to the wharves, old Burke coaching and encouraging, checking and speeding us, till we worked well together. Only last Sunday he had taken us out of our way, up the creek, to where we could see the flag at the *Rhondda's* mast-head. The old man said nothing, but well we knew he was thinking of how the square of blue silk, with Californian emblem worked in white, would look at his trim little *Hilda's* fore-truck! This flag accompanied the Cup, and now (if only the Yankee and his hired whalemén were safely at sea) we had hopes of seeing it at our masthead again.

Tea over—still excited talk went on. Some one recalled the last time we had overhauled and passed the *Rhondda's* gig.

"It's all very well your bucking about beating the *Rhondda*," said Gregson; "but don't think we're going to have it all our own way! Mebbe they were 'playing 'possum' when we came by that time!"

"Maybe," said Jones. "There's Peters and H. Dobson in her crew. Good men! Both rowed in the Worcester boat that left the Conways' at the start, three years ago. . . . And what about the *Rickmers*? . . . No, no! It won't do to be too cocksure! . . . Eh, Takia?"

Takia was our cox'n, a small wiry Jap. Nothing great in inches, but a demon for good steering and timing a stroke. He was serving his apprenticeship with us and had been a year in the *Hilda*. Brute strength was not one of his points, but none was keener or more active in the rigging than our little Jap.

He smiled,—he always smiled,—he found it the easiest way of speaking English. "Oh, yes," he said. "Little cocksu'—good! Too much cocksu'—no good!"

We laughed at the wisdom of the East.

"Talk about being cocky," said Gregson; "you should hear Captain Schenke bragging about the way he brought the *Hedwig Rickmers* out. I heard 'em and the old man at it in the ship-chandler's yesterday. Hot! . . . Look here, you chaps! I don't think the old man cares so much to win the Cup as to beat Schenke! The big 'squarehead' is always ramming it down Burke's throat how he brought his barque out from Liverpool in a hundred and five days, while the *Hilda* took ten days more on her last run out!"

"That's so, I guess," said Jones. (Jones had the Yankee 'touch.') "Old Burke would dearly love to put a spoke in his wheel, but it'll take some doing. They say that Schenke has got a friend down from Sacramento—gym.-instructor or something to a

college up there. He'll be training the 'Dutchy' crew like blazes. They'll give us a hot time, I'll bet ! ”

Gregson rose to go on deck. “ Oh, well,” he said, “ it won't be so bad if the *James Flint* only lifts his hook by Saturday. Here's one bloomin' *hombre* that funks racin' a fancy whaler ! . . . An' doesn't care who knows it, either ! ”

II

Thursday passed—and now Friday—still there was no sign of the wind changing, and the big Yankee barque lay quietly at anchor over by the Presidio.

When the butcher came off from the shore with the day's stores, we eagerly questioned him about the prospects of the *James Flint's* sailing. “ *Huh !* I guess yew're nat the only ‘citizens’ that air concerned 'bout that ! ” he said. “ They're talkin' 'bout nuthin' else on every ‘lime-juicer’ in the Bay ! . . . An' th' *Rickmers* ! Gee ! Schenkie's had his eye glued ter th' long telescope ever since day-break, watchin' fer th' *Flint* heavin' up anchor ! ”

The butcher had varied information to give us. Now it was that Bully Nathan had telegraphed to his New York owners for permission to remain in port over Sunday. Then again, Bully was on

the point of being dismissed his ship for not taking full advantage of a puff of nor'-west wind that came and went on Thursday night.

. . . The *Flint* was short of men! . . . The *Flint* had a full crew aboard! Rumours and rumours! "All sorts o' talk," said the butcher; "but I know this fer certain—she's got all her stores aboard. Gosh! I guess—she—has! I don't like to wish nobody no harm, boyees, but I hope Bully Nathan's first chop 'll choke him, fer th' way he done me over the beef! . . . Scorch 'im!"

In the forenoon we dropped the gig and put out for practice. Old Burke and the mate came after us in the dinghy, the old man shouting instruction and encouragement through his megaphone as we rowed a course or spurted hard for a furious three minutes. Others were out on the same ploy, and the backwaters of the Bay had each a lash of oars to stir their tideless depths. Near us the green boat of the *Rickmers* thrashed up and down in style. Time and again we drew across—'just for a friendly spurt'—but the 'Dutchies' were not giving anything away, and sheered off as we approached. We spent an hour or more at practice and were rowing leisurely back to the ship when the green boat overhauled us, then slowed to her skipper's orders.

"How you vass, Cabtin Burke?" said Schenke, an enormous fair-headed Teuton, powerful-looking,

but run sadly to fat in his elder years. " You t'ink you get a chanst now, *hein* ? . . . Now de Yankee is goin' away ! " He pointed over to the Presidio, where the *Flint* lay at anchor. We followed the line of his fat forefinger. At anchor, yes, but the anchor nearly a-weigh. Her flags were hoisted, the blue peter fluttering at the fore, and the *Active* tug was passing a hawser aboard, getting ready to tow her out. The smoke from the tugboat's funnel was whirling and blowing over the low forts that guard the Golden Gates. Good luck ! A fine nor'-west breeze had come that would lift our dreaded rival far to the south'ard on her way round Cape Horn !

Schenke saw the pleased look with which old Burke regarded the Yankee's preparations for departure.

" Goot bizness, eh ? " he said. " You t'ink you fly de flack on de *Hilda* nex' *Sonndag*, Cabtin ? Vell ! Ah wish you goot look, but you dond't got it all de same ! "

" Oh, well, Captain Schenke, we can but thry," said the old man. " We can but thry, sorr ! . . . Shure, she's a foine boat—that o' yours. . . . An' likely-looking lads, too ! " No one could but admire the well-set figures of the German crew as they stroked easily beside us.

" *Schweinehunden*," said Schenke brutally. We noticed more than one stolid face darkling as they

glanced aside. Schenke had the name of a 'hard case.' "*Schweinehunden*," he said again. "Dey dond't like de hard vork, Cabtin. . . . Dey dond't like it—but ve takes der Coop, all de same! Dey pulls goot und strong, oder"—he rasped a short sentence in rapid Low German—"Shermans dond't be beat by no durn lime-juicer, *nein!*"

Old Burke grinned. "Cocky as ever, Captain Schenke! Bedad now, since ye had the luck of ye're last passage there's no limit to ye!"

"Luck! Luck! Always de luck mit you, Cabtin!"

"An' whatt ilse? . . . Shure, if I hadn't struck a bilt of calms an' had more than me share of head winds off the Horn, I'd have given ye a day or two mesilf!"

"Ho! Ho! Ho! *Das ist gut!*" The green boat rocked with Schenke's merriment. He laughed from his feet up—every inch of him shook with emotion. "Ho! Ho! Hoo! *Das ist ganz gut.* You t'ink you beat de *Hedwig Rickmers* too, Cabtin? You beat 'm mit dot putty leetle barque? You beat 'm mit de *Hilda*, *nichtwahr?*"

"Well, no," said our old man. "I don't exactly say I can beat the *Rickmers*, but if I had the luck o' winds that ye had, bedad, I'd crack th' *Hilda* out in a hundred an' five days too!"

"Now, dot is not drue, Cabtin! *Aber ganz und*

gar nicht! You know you haf bedder look von de vind as Ah got. Ah sail mein sheep! Ah dond't wait for de fair winds nor not'ings!"

"No," said Burke, "but ye get 'em, all the same. Everybody knows ye've th' divil's own luck, Schenke!"

"Und so you vas! Look now, Cabtin Burke. You t'ink you got so fast a sheep as mein, eh? Vell! Ah gif you a chanst to make money. Ah bett you feefty dollars to tventig, Ah take mein sheep home quicker as you vass!"

"Done wit' ye," said stout old 'Paddy' Burke, though well he knew the big German barque could sail round the little *Hilda*. "Fifty dollars to twenty, Captain Schenke, an' moind ye've said it!"

The green boat sheered off and forged ahead, Schenke laughing and waving his hand derisively. When they had pulled out of earshot, the old man turned ruefully to the mate: "Five pounds clean t'rown away, mister! Foine I know the *Rickmers* can baate us, but I wasn't goin' t' let that ould 'squarehead' have it all his own way! Divil th' fear!"

We swung under the *Hilda's* stern and hooked on to the gangway. The old man stepped out, climbed a pace or two, then came back.

"Look ye here, byes," he said, "I'll give ye foive dollars a man—an' a day's 'liberty' t' spind

it—if ye only baate th' 'Dutchmen.' . . . Let th' Cup go where it will ! ”

III

The Bay of San Francisco is certainly one of the finest natural harbours in the world, let Sydney and Rio and Falmouth all contest the claim. Landlocked to every wind that blows, with only a narrow channel open to the sea, the navies of the world could lie peacefully together in its sheltered waters. The coast that environs the harbour abounds in natural beauties, but of all the wooded creeks—fair stretches of undulating downs—or stately curves of winding river, none surpasses the little bay formed by the turn of Benita, the northern postern of the Golden Gates. Here is the little township of Sancilito, with its pretty white houses nestling among the dark green of the deeply wooded slopes. In the bay there is good anchorage for a limited number of vessels, and fortunate were they who manned the tall ships that lay there, swinging ebb and flood, waiting for a burthen of golden grain.

On Saturday the little bay was crowded by a muster of varied craft. The ships at anchor were 'dressed' to the mastheads with gaily-coloured flags. Huge ferry-boats passed slowly up and down, their tiers of decks crowded with sightseers.

Tug-boats and launches darted about, clearing the course, or convoying racing boats to the starting lines. Ships' boats of all kinds were massed together close inshore : gigs and pinnaces, lean whale-boats, squat dinghys, even high-sided ocean lifeboats with their sombre broad belts of ribbed cork. A gay scene of colour and animation. A fine turn-out to see the fortune of the Merchants' Cup !

At two the Regatta began. A race for longshore craft showed that the boarding-house 'crimps' were as skilful at boatman's work as at inducing sailormen to desert their ships. Then two outriggers flashed by, contesting a heat for a College race. We in the *Hilda's* gig lay handily at the starting line and soon were called out. There were nine entries for the Cup, and the judges had decided to run three heats. We were drawn in the first, and, together with the *Ardlea's* and *Compton's* gigs, went out to be inspected. The boats had to race in sea-service conditions, no lightening was allowed. At the challenge of the judges we showed our gear. "Spare oar—right ! Rowlocks—right ! Sea-anchor—right ! Bottom boards and stern grating—right. Painter, ten fathoms ; hemp. . . . A bit short there, *Compton* ! Eh ? . . . Oh—all right," said the official, and we manœuvred into position, our sterns held in by the guard-boats. Some of the ships' captains had engaged a steam-launch to

follow the heats, and old Burke was there with his trumpet, shouting encouragement already.

" Air yew ready ? "

A pause : then, pistol shot ! We struck water and laid out ! Our task was not difficult. The *Ardlea's* gig was broad-bowed and heavy ; they had no chance ; but the *Compton's* gave us a stiff pull to more than midway. Had they been like us, three months at boat-work, we had not pulled so easily up to the mark, but their ship was just in from Liverpool, and they were in poor condition for a mile and a half at pressure. We won easily, and scarce had cheered the losers before the launch came fussing up.

" Come aboard, Takia," shouted old Burke. " Ye come down wit' me an' see what shape the German makes. He's drawn wit' th' *Rhondda* in this heat ! "

Takia bundled aboard the launch and we hauled inshore to watch the race. There was a delay at the start. Schenke, '*nichts verstehen*,' as he said, was for sending his boat away without a painter or spare gear. He was pulled up by the judges, and had to borrow.

Now they were ready. The *Rickmers* outside, *Rhondda* in the middle berth, and the neat little *Slieve Donard* inshore. At the start the *Rhonddas* came fair away from the German boat, but even

at the distance we could see that the ' Dutchmen ' were well in hand. At midway the *Rhondda* was leading by a length, still going strong, but they had shot their bolt, and the green boat was surely pulling up. The *Slieve Donard*, after an unsteady course, had given up. Soon we could hear old Schenke roaring oaths and orders, as his launch came flying on in the wake of the speeding boats.

The Germans spurted.

We yelled encouragement to the *Rhonddas*.
" Give 'em beans, old sons ! . . . "

" *Rhondda ! Rhondda ! . . .* Shake 'er up ! " Gallantly the white boat strove to keep her place, but the greens were too strong. With a rush, they took the lead and held it to the finish, though two lengths from the line their stroke faltered, the swing was gone, and they were dabbling feebly when the shot rang out.

" A grand race," said every one around. " A grand race "—but old Burke had something to say when he steamed up to put our cox'n among us. " Byes, byes," he said, " if there had been twinty yards more the *Rhondda* would have won. Now d'ye moind, Takia, ye divil . . . d'ye moind ! Keep th' byes in hand till I give ye th' wurrd ! . . . An' whin ye get th' wurrd, byes ! . . . Oh, Saints ! Shake her up when ye get th' wurrd ! "

The third heat was closely contested. All three

boats, two Liverpool barques and a Nova Scotiaman. came on steadily together. A clean race, rowed from start to finish, and the *Tuebrook* winning by a short length.

The afternoon was well spent when we stripped for the final, and took up our positions on the line. How big and muscular the Germans looked ! How well the green boat sat the water ! With what inward quakings we noted the clean fine lines of stem and stern ! . . . Of the *Tuebrook* we had no fear. We knew they could never stand the pace the Germans would set. Could we ?

Old Burke, though in a fever of excitement when we came to the line, had little to say. "Keep the byes in hand, Takia—till ye get th' wurrd," was all he muttered. We swung our oar-blades forward.

"Ready ?" The starter challenged us.

Suddenly Takia yelped ! We struck and lay back as the shot rang out ! A stroke gained ! Takia had taken the flash ; the others the report !

The Jap's clever start gave us confidence and a lead. Big Jones at stroke worked us up to better the advantage. The green boat sheered a little, then steadied and came on, keeping to us, though nearly a length astern. The *Tuebrook* had made a bad start, but was thrashing away pluckily in the rear

So we hammered at it for a third of the course, when Takia took charge. Since his famous start he had left us to take stroke as Jones pressed us, but now he saw signs of the waver that comes after the first furious burst—shifting grip or change of foothold.

“*'Trok!—'trok!—'trok!*” he muttered, and steadied the pace. “*'Troke!—'troke!—'troke!*” in monotone, good for soothing tension.

Past midway the green boat came away. The ring of the Germans' rowlocks rose to treble pitch. Slowly they drew up, working at top speed. Now they were level—level! and Takia still droning “*'troke!—'troke!—'troke!*”—as if the lead was ours!

Wild outcry came from the crowd as the green boat forged ahead! Deep roars from Schenke somewhere in the rear! Now, labouring still to Takia's *'troke!—'troke!* we had the foam of the German's stern wash at our blades! “*Come away, Hilda's!*” . . . “*Shake her up, there!*” . . . “*Hilda-h! Hilda-h!*”—Takia took no outward heed of the cries. He was staring stolidly ahead, bending to the pulse of the boat. No outward heed—but *'troke!—'troke!* came faster from his lips. We strained, almost holding the Germans' ensign at level with our bow pennant.

Loud over the wild yells of the crowd we heard

the voice we knew—old Burke's bull-roar: "*Let 'er rip, Taki' ! Let 'er rip, bye !*"

Takia's eyes gleamed as he sped us up—up—up ! '*Troke* became a yelp like a wounded dog's. He crouched, standing, in the sternsheets, and lashed us up to a furious thrash of oars ! Still quicker ! . . . The eyes of him glared at each of us, as if daring us to fail ! The yelp became a scream as we drew level—the Germans still at top speed. "*Up ! Up ! Up !*" yells Takia, little yellow devil with a white froth at his lips ! "*Up ! Up ! Up !*" swaying unsteadily to meet the furious urging.

The ring of the German rowlocks deepens—deepens—we see the green bow at our blades again. Her number two falters—jars—recovers again—and pulls stubbornly on. Their 'shot' is fired ! They can do no more ! Done !

And so are we ! Takia drops the yoke ropes and leans forward on the gunwale ! Oars jar together ! Big Jones bends forward with his mouth wide—wide ! Done !

But not before a hush—a solitary pistol shot—then roar of voices and shrilling of steamer syrens tell us that the Cup is ours !

IV

A month later there was a stir in the western seaports. No longer the ships lay swinging idly at their moorings. The harvest of grain was ready for the carriers, and every day sail was spread to the free wind outside the Golden Gates, and laden ships went speeding on their homeward voyages. The days of boat-races and pleasant time-passing harbour jobs were gone ; it was now work—work—to get the ship ready for her burden, and, swaying the great sails aloft, to rig harness for the power that was to bear us home. From early morning till late evening we were kept hard at it ; for Captain Burke and the mate were as keen on getting the *Hilda* to sea after her long stay in port as they were on jockeying us up to win the Cup. Often, when we turned to in the morning, we would find a new shipmate ready to bear a hand with us. The old man believed in picking up a likely man when he offered. Long experience of Pacific ports had taught him how difficult it is to get a crew at the last moment.

So, when at length the cargo was stowed, we were quite ready to go to sea, while many others—the *Hedwig Rickmers* among them—were waiting for men.

On the day before sailing a number of the ship

captains were gathered together in the chandler's store, talking of freights and passages, and speculating on the runs they hoped to make. Burke and Schenke were the loudest talkers, for we were both bound to Falmouth 'for orders,' and the *Rickmers* would probably sail three days after we had gone.

"Vat 'bout dot bett you make mit me, Cabtin?" said Schenke. "Dot iss all recht, no?"

"Oh, yess," answered the old man, but without enthusiasm. "That stands."

"Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Tventig dollars to feefty—dot you goes home quicker as me, no?" Schenke turned to the other men. "Vat you trinks, yentlemen? Ah tink Ah sbend der tventig dollars now—so sure Ah vass."

The others laughed. "Man, man," said Findlayson of the *Rhondda*. "You don't tell me Burke's been fool enough to take that bet. Hoo! You haven't the ghost of a chance, Burke."

"Och, ye never know," said the now doleful sportsman. "Ye never know ye'er luck."

"Look here, Cabtin," said Schenke (good-humoured by the unspoken tribute to his vessel's sailing powers)—"Ah gif you a chanst. Ah make de bett dis vay—look. Ve goes to Falmouth—you und me, *hein*? Now, de first who comes on de shore vins de money. Dot vill gif you t'ree days' start, no?"

"That's more like it," said the other captains. "I wish you luck, Burke," said Findlayson. "Good luck—you'll need it too—if you are to be home before the big German."

So the bet was made.

At daybreak next morning we put out to sea. The good luck that the *Rhondda* wished us came our way from the very first. When the tug left us we set sail to a fine fair wind, and soon were bowling along in style. We found the nor'-east Trades with little seeking; strong Trades, too, that lifted us to the Line almost before the harbour dust was blown from our masts and spars. There calms fell on us for a few days, but we drifted south in the right current, and in less than forty days had run into the 'westerlies' and were bearing away for the Horn.

Old Burke was 'cracking on' for all the *Hilda* could carry canvas. Every morning when he came on deck the first question to the mate would be: "Any ships in sight, mister?" . . . "Any ships astern," he meant, for his first glance was always to where the big green four-master might be expected to heave in sight. Then, when nothing was reported, he would begin his day-long strut up and down the poop, whistling "Garryowen" and rubbing his hands

Nor was the joy at our good progress his alone.

We in the half-deck knew of the bet, and were keen that the ship which carried the Merchants' Cup should not be overhauled by the runner-up ! We had made a fetish of the trophy so hardly won. The Cup itself was safely stowed in the ship's strong chest, but the old man had let us have custody of the flag. Big Jones had particular charge of it ; and it had been a custom while in 'Frisco to exhibit it on the Saturday nights to admiring and envious friends from other ships. This custom we continued when at sea. True, there were no visitors to set us up and swear what lusty chaps we were, but we could frank one another and say, " If you hadn't done this or that, we would never have won the race."

On a breezy Saturday evening we were busy at these rites. The *Hilda* was doing well before a steady nor'-west wind, but the weather—though nothing misty—was dark as a pall. Thick clouds overcast the sky, and there seemed no dividing line between the darkling sea and the windy banks that shrouded the horizon. A dirty night was in prospect ; the weather would thicken later ; but that made the modest comforts of the half-deck seem more inviting by comparison ; and we came together for our weekly ' sing-song '—all but Gregson, whose turn it was to stand the look-out on the fo'c'sle-head.

The flag was brought out and hung up—Jones

standing by to see that no pipe-lights were brought near—and we ranted at 'Ye Mariners of England' till the mate sent word that further din would mean a 'work-up' job for all of us.

Little we thought that we mariners would soon be facing dangers as great as any we so glibly sang about. Even as we sang, the *Hilda* was speeding on a fatal course! Across her track the almost submerged hull of a derelict lay drifting. Black night veiled the danger from the keenest eyes.

A frenzied order from the poop put a stunning period to our merriment. "Helm up, f'r God's sake! . . . *Up!*—oh God!—*Up!* *Up!*" A furious impact dashed us to the deck. Staggering, bruised, and bleeding, we struggled to our feet. Outside the yells of fear-stricken men mingled with hoarse orders, the crash of spars hurtling from aloft vied with the thunder of canvas, as the doomed barque swung round broadside to the wind and sea.

Even in that dread moment Jones had heed of his precious flag. As we flew to the door, he tore the flag down, stuffing it in his jumper as he joined us at the boats.

There was no time to hoist out the life-boats—it was pinnace and gig or nothing. Already the bows were low in the water. "She goes. She goes!" yelled some one. "Oh, Christ! She's going!"

We bore frantically on the tackles that linked the gig, swung her out, and lowered by the run ; the mate had the pinnace in the water, men were swarming into her. As the gig struck water, the barque heeled to the rail awash. We crowded in, old Burke the last to leave her, and pushed off. Our once stately *Hilda* reeled in a swirl of broken water, and the deep sea took her !

Sailor work ! No more than ten minutes between ' Ye Mariners ' and the foundering of our barque !

We lay awhile with hearts too full for words ; then the pinnace drew near, and the mate called the men. All there but one ! ' Gregson ? ' . . . No Gregson ! The bosun knew. He had seen what was Gregson lying still under the wreck of the topmost spars.

The captain and mate conferred long together. We had no sail in the gig, but the larger boat was fully equipped. " It's the only chance, mister," said Burke at last. " No food—no water ! We can't hold out for long. Get sail on your boat and stand an hour or two to the east'ard. Ye may fall in with a ship ; she w-was right in th' track whin she s-struck. We can but lie to in th' gig an' pray that a ship comes by."

" Aye, aye, sir." They stepped the mast and hoisted sail. " Good-bye all ; God bless ye, captain," they said as the canvas, swelled. " Keep heart !"

For a time we heard their voices shouting us God-speed—then silence came !

v

Daybreak !

Thank God the bitter night was past ! Out of the east the long-looked-for light grew on us, as we lay to sea-anchor, lurching unsteadily in the teeth of wind and driving rain. At the first grey break we scanned the now misty horizon. There was no sign of the pinnacle ; no God-sent sail in all the dreary round !

We crouched on the bottom boards of the little gig and gave way to gloomy thoughts. What else could be when we were alone and adrift on the broad Pacific, without food or water, in a tiny gig already perilously deep with the burden of eight of us ? What a difference to the gay day when we manned the same little boat and set out in pride to the contest ! Here was the same spare oar that we held up to the judges—the long oar that Jones was now swaying over the stern, keeping her head to the wind and sea ! Out there in the tumbling water the sea-anchor held its place ; the ten fathoms of good hemp ' painter ' was straining at the bows !

The same boat ! The same gear ! The same crew, but how different ! A crew of bent heads and wearied limbs ! Listless - eyed, despairing ! A

ghastly crew, with black care riding in the heaving boat with us !

Poor old Burke had hardly spoken since his last order to the mate to sail the pinnace to the east in search of help. When anything was put to him, he would say, " Aye, aye, b'ye," and take no further heed. He was utterly crushed by the disaster that had come so suddenly on the heels of his 'good luck.' He sat staring stonily ahead, deaf to our hopes and fears.

Water we had in plenty as the day wore on. The rain-soaked clothes of us were sufficient for the time, but soon hunger came and added a physical pain to the torture of our doubt. Again and again we stood up on the reeling thwarts and looked wildly around the sea-line. No pinnace—no ship—nothing ! Nothing, only sea and sky, and circling sea-birds that came to mock at our misery with their plaintive cries.

A bitter night ! A no less cruel day ! Dark came on us again, chill and windy, and the salt spray cutting at us like a whiplash.

Boo-m-m !

Big Jones stood up in the stern-sheets, swaying unsteadily. " D'ye hear anything there ? . . . Like a gun ? "

A gun ? Gun ? . . . Nothing new ! . . . We had been hearing guns, seeing sails—in our minds—

all the day! All day . . . guns . . . and sail!
Boom-m-m-m!

"Gun! Oh God . . . a gun! Capt'n, a gun, d'ye hear! Hay—Hay-H. Out oars, there! A gun!" Hoarse in excitement Jones shook the old man and called at his ear. "Aye, aye, b'ye. Aye, aye," said the broken old man, seeming without understanding.

Jones ceased trying to rouse him, and, running out the steering oar, called on us to haul the sea-anchor aboard. We lay to our oars, listening for a further gunfire.

Whooo-o. . . . Boom-m-m.

A rocket! They were looking for us then! The pinnacle must have been picked up! A cheer—what a cheer!—came brokenly from our lips; and we lashed furiously at the oars, steering to where a glare in the mist had come with the last report.

Roused by the thrash of our oars, the old man sat up. "Whatt now, b'ye? Whatt now?"

"Ship firin' rockets, sir," said Jones. "Rockets . . . no mistake." As he spoke, another coloured streamer went flaming through the eastern sky. "Give way, there! We'll miss her if she's running south! Give way, all!" The glare of the rocket put heart into our broken old skipper. "Steady now, b'yes," he said, with something of his old enthusiasm.

We laboured steadily at the oars, but our strength was gone. The sea too, that we had thought moderate when lying to sea-anchor, came at us broadside on and set our light boat to a furious dance. Wave crests broke and lashed aboard, the reeling boat was soon awash, and the spare men had to bale frantically to keep her afloat. But terror of the ship running south from us nerved our wearied arms, and we kept doggedly swinging the oars. Soon we made out the vessel's sidelight—the gleam of her starboard light, that showed that she was hauled to the wind, not running south as we had feared. They could not see on such a night, we had nothing to make a signal, but the faint green flame gave us heart in our distress !

The old man, himself again, was now steering, giving us Big Jones to bear at the oars. As we drew on we made out the loom of the vessel's sails—a big ship under topsails only, and sailing slowly to the west. We pulled down wind to cross her course, shouting together as we rowed. Would they never hear ? . . . Again ! . . . Again !

Suddenly there came a hail from the ship, a roar of orders, rattle of blocks and gear, the yards swung round and she layed up in the wind, while the ghostly glare of a blue light lit up the sea around.

A crowd of men were gathered at the waist, now shouting and cheering as we laboured painfully into

the circle of vivid light. Among them a big man (huge he looked in that uncanny glare) roared encouragement in hoarse gutturals.

Old Schenke ? The *Hedwig Rickmers* ?

Aye—Schenke ! But a different Schenke to the big, blustering, overbearing 'Square-head' we had known in 'Frisco. Schenke as kind as a brother—a brother of the sea indeed. Big, fat, honest Schenke, passing his huge arm through that of our broken old skipper, leading him aft to his own bed, and silencing his faltering story by words of cheer. "*Ach, du lieber Gott*. It is all right, no ? All right, Cabtin, now you come on board. Ah know all 'bout it ! . . . Ah pick de oder boat up in de morning, und dey tells me. You come af' mit me, Cabtin. . . . Goot, no ? "

"Ninety-six days, Schenke, and here we are at the mouth of the Channel !" Old Burke had a note of regret in the saying. "Ninety-six days ! Shure, this ship o' yours can sail. With a bit o' luck, now, ye'll be in Falmouth under the hundred."

"So. If de vind holds goot. Oh, de *Hedwig Rickmers* is a goot sheep, no ? But if Ah dond't get de crew of de poor leetle *Hilda* to vork mein sheep, Ah dond't t'ink ve comes home so quick as hundert days, no ? "

"God bless us, man. Shure, it's the least they cud do, now. An' you kaapin' us in food an' drink an' clothes, bedad—all the time."

"Vat Ah do, Cabtin. Ah leaf you starfe, no?"

"Oh. Some men would have put into the Falklands and landed——"

"Und spoil a goot bassage, eh? *Ach nein*. More better to go on. You know dese men Ah get in 'Frisco is no goot. Dem 'hoodlums,' dey dond't know de sailorman vork. But your beoble is all recht, eh! Gott! If Ah dond't haf dem here, it is small sail ve can carry on de sheep."

"Och, now, ye just say that, Schenke, ye just say that! But it's glad I am if we're any use t' ye."

"Hundert days to Falmouth, eh?" Schenke grinned as he said it. "Vat 'bout dot bett now, Cabtin?"

"Oh that," said Burke queerly. "You win, of course. I'm not quite broke yet, Captain Schenke. I'll pay the twenty dollars all right."

"No, no. De bett is not von. No? De bett vass—'who is de first on shore come,' *hein*? Goot. Ven de sheep comes to Falmouth ve goes on shore, you und me, together. Like dis, eh?" He seized Burke by the arm and made a motion that they two should thus step out together.

Burke, shamefaced, said: "Aye, aye, b'ye."

"Ah dond't care about de bett," continued the big German. "De bett is noting, but, look here, Cabtin—Ah tell you Ah look to vin dot Merchants' Cup. *Gott!* Ah vass *verricht* ven your boys come in first. *Ach so!* Und now de Cup iss at de bottom of de Pacific." He sighed regretfully. "*Gott!* I vant' t' be de first Sherman to vin dot Cup too!"

The mate of the *Rickmers* came on the poop and said something to his captain. Schenke turned to the old man in some wonderment. . . . "Vat dis is, eh? My mate tell me dot your boys is want to speak mit me. Vat it is, Cabtin? No troubles I hope?"

Burke looked as surprised as the other. "Send them up, Heinrich," he said. We, the crew of the *Hilda's* gig, filed on to the poop, looking as hot and uncomfortable as proper sailorfolk should do when they come on a deputation. Jones headed us, and he carried a parcel under his arm.

"Captain Schenke," he said. "We are all here—the crew of the *Hilda's* gig, that you picked up when—when—we were in a bad way. All here but poor Gregson." The big lad's voice broke as he spoke of his lost watchmate. "An' if he was here he would want t' thank ye too for the way you've done by us. I can't say any more, Captain Schenke—but we want you to take a small present

from us—the crew of the *Hilda's* gig.” He held out the parcel.

Only half understanding the lad's broken words, Schenke took the parcel and opened it. “*Ach Gott. Lieber Gott,*” he said, and turned to show the gift to old Burke. Tears stood in the big ‘square-head’s’ eyes; stood, and rolled unchecked down his fat cheeks. Tears of pleasure! Tears of pity! Stretched between his hands was a weather-beaten flag, its white emblem stained and begrimed by sea-water!

A tattered square of blue silk—the flag of the Merchants’ Cup!

XVII

BEHIND THE MAY

ON the broad windy floor of the North Sea gales spring up without a warning which landsmen can discern, but the fishermen, by portents which they alone can understand—wisps, it may be, of stringy clouds banking to the south-east, or a sickly sun, or a tide out of order, or an unwonted movement among the fish—can tell whether wind will come before daybreak. When the chill, grey mist, perhaps the most familiar phenomenon of the North Sea, comes up from the south, shutting out land and lights, ships and sail, the old men can tell if a gale is in its train ; and on the East Coast, where the harbours are bar and tidal and impassable in a breaking sea, their decision must be prompt, for if time and tide are not reckoned with in running for shelter, their only safety lies in riding out the storm to leeward of the nets.

There are, however, one or two places accessible in all weathers, where shelter may be had in easterly

gales. Inchkeith, though far from the fishing grounds, is one, and a few acres of comparatively calm water lie to leeward of May Island, 'behind the May,' as the fishermen call it. Even by full-powered steam vessels, which can usually make a better anchorage, the May is not despised, for it offers a convenient spot where they can lie-to until the fury of the gale has spent itself, and they can proceed on their voyage in safety.

On an evening in November in a gale of easterly wind we made the Tay bar, but finding a tremendous sea breaking on the flats and the leading lights obscured by driving mist we thought it prudent to put out again until the sea on the bar had gone down. With the weather 'thickening' and threatening snow, we had no liking to lose our land-fall, so we sounded across Fife Ness and the Carrs and anchored 'close-to' to leeward of the May. Few vessels as yet had taken advantage of the shelter, for, as the tide was high and the wind north of east, the northern harbours were still accessible. But with the ebb the opportunity passed, and presently the vessels which had happened on the falling tide were groping their way in the mist and darkness to the lee of the friendly rock, the one quiet spot amid the turbulence and tumult of a North Sea gale. Hard squalls blew on with a cold bite in them that told of snow and a wind well north.

Ahead of us, as we lay with cable strained to weight of wind, the lighthouse flashed its beams at timely intervals, and the raucous wail of the siren voiced a pregnant warning—though but a weakling whisper in the fury of the storm. 'High . . . low. High . . . low.' Was ever a warning more mournful or discordant ?

As the squalls became more frequent and increased in force the mist gave way to sleet, and then to snow, driving in large light flakes, the forerunners of a heavy fall. Steam trawlers and small coasting craft crept out of the pall about us warily and sounding long notes on their steam whistles, and soon what had been empty sea behind a lonely rock became a rendezvous of importance, crowded by ships from all airts, and, even in the mist and darkness, presenting in animated sight and sound a spectacle at sea—riding and navigating lights now in sight, now shut in ; clatter of bells and hoot of steam whistles ; hiss of escaping steam and clank of cable and windlass. Fishermen, steam and sail, coasters, and North Country colliers, a topsail schooner and a few rough cobs from the Dunbar coast ; a jumble of maritime types blown together like paper in odd corners of a city street. Lights studded the tiny anchorage, where a short time ago was a darkness, broken only by the flashing periods of the May light. Close in under the island, where

fishermen were mending broken trawls or nets, the gleam of the working flares lit up the rugged cliff, and the echo of their cries and hails, thrown back by the land, could be heard faintly in the lulling of the storm. Most of the fishers kept under weigh, and only the larger vessels anchored. Near to the north point of the island, where the water was smoothest and the shelter best, the smaller craft kept elbowing one another out of choice positions, and the rapidly-changing lights, red to green and green to red, showed collision to be skilfully averted.

In the early hours of the morning the squalls became less frequent and the snow ceased. The sky cleared in parts, and a dim moon, low to the eastward, shed a faint light on the ships, uncomfortably berthed together within the small shelter afforded by the island. Beyond, huge seas, with the sweep of the leagues of the German Ocean behind them, thundered 'up Firth' to where Scotland stood, gaunt and forbidding, a barrier to their advance. In the clearing, the coast lights showed up around us ; St. Abbs and Barnsness, Fidra and the loom of the Bass, and the Carr Lightship, riding out the storm to the nor'ard, cast a bright, undaunted beam. Towards daybreak the wind, which till now had blown steady from the nor'east, began to veer, the first sign of the breaking of the gale. At times a blast from the south end of the island

would strike us, and the accompanying seas would rush in among the assembled craft, as if in triumph at finding them within reach. Inside there was no weight of wind to back them up, and they spent themselves in a long swell, jostling the smaller craft into heaving confusion.

Faint and low, scarce pitched above the tenor of the gale, we heard a sound of gunfire to the nor'ard. Presently it was repeated, and we knew a call of the helpless at sea. A blaze of coloured fire over the North Carr Lightship showed her to be throwing rockets, signals for the lifeboat; and although we could see nothing of the wreck, we judged her to lie between the lightship and Fife Ness. A squall narrowed the northern horizon and shut out the vessels from our sight. For a time we heard the guns, and then, listen as we might, there was no sound from the nor'ard but the shriek of the gale and cries of the seabirds.

Dawn broke and showed us a waste of tumbling, grey seas and a sickly light in a still threatening sky. The lee of the island was white with a fleecy pall, and on our decks in places sheltered from the flying spray lay snow. A change indeed for us, so lately steaming through Indian seas. Now and again with a dull booming the seas would break heavily on the weather side of the island, and at times the spray and spindrift even reached the

decks of the vessels lying behind it. With daylight to help them, some of the ships bore away 'up Firth' to reach their ports, and only the fishers, whose business lay to seaward, held to the shelter. With us, who were waiting for water on the Tay bar, there was no need of haste. We were as well 'behind the May' as elsewhere.

About noon we saw a steam trawler bearing in from the nor'ard. She had the rags of an ensign streaming from her masthead, and we were glad when we recognised the 'Union' up. Evidently her cause was another's, and we watched her approach with interest. Driving into the seas, hull in the hollow, or rising to show a dripping keel, she held on her way, and reached the shelter she was seeking. Her decks were lumbered with ill-lashed trawl gear. A dinghy boat, stove almost out of recognition, lay on her hatch cover, and near it crouched a crowd of seamen, braced to meet the sickening lurches of the vessel. She rode light on the water and even we, 'deep-seamen' as we were, could tell she was not long out of port. She came close to us, and her skipper hailed the 'bridge' in the homely tongue of the North. He asked if we were for Dundee, and our answer assured him. He had taken six of the crew off a schooner, he said, a wreck on the North Carr (the vessel, whose guns we had heard), and he wished our captain to take them

off his hands, as he was bound out to the 'lang forties' when the weather cleared. This our captain agreed to do, and the skipper gave us further particulars. A crew of nine, he thought, and three gone under. He could only get six men off the wreck. " . . . A wheen furrin' loons. Johnny Creepaws or Dutchmen, belike ! "

While thus engaged his keen eyes caught a speck of sail to the nor'ard, and he brought a battered pair of binoculars to bear on it. We watched the speck till it grew to a blue-painted boat scudding under a close-reefed fore-lug ; a ' National ' lifeboat making for the May. " They'll be th' Aerbroath lauds," said the trawler's skipper. " Ah doot th' Bawrhull boat couldna' win oot in a flood an' a sea like thon ! " He hauled down the flag from his masthead, and gave a blast on his syren. The lifeboat payed off and steered towards him. " Ye'r ower late, lauds, ower late ! Ah've gotten sax haun's oot o' her afore she broke upon Balcolmie Brigs." The coxswain of the lifeboat waved a hand in answer. He rounded the trawler's stern, lowered his sail and mast, and his boat lay a gallant picture on the heaving sea between our vessels. " Ah wis on th' Ae-bertay Saun's when they got word frae th' May," he said, . . . " a ' geordie ' ketch on th' 'Elbow ! Gi'e us word o' yer schooner, an' a'll awa' in, an' telegraph frae th' May ! " He got the

particulars, and blades flashed as his boat forced her way through the water to a possible landing at the Altar Stanes.

By skilful manœuvring the trawler was brought close alongside, and the distressed seamen, as opportunity offered, clambered on to our deck; but not before they had expressed, in pantomime if words failed, their gratitude to their rescuers. The Aberdeen Samaritan accepted their thanks in a shamefaced and embarrassed way; "'at's a' richt, lauds, 'at's a' richt. Ah wis jist gaun bye, like, an' ah thocht mebbe yis be better oot o' her!" Although within the three-mile limit, our captain thought fit to arrange a little matter of spirits and tobacco with the trawler. These were being passed aboard to a burly fisherman when a sea took his vessel on the bow, causing her to lurch violently towards us. The man, encumbered by the 'largesse,' jumped to put a fender between the vessels' sides. The skipper, the man whose nerves were steady when he handled his boat in the wash of the North Carr, was appalled at his recklessness. A cry, almost a scream, came from his dry lips—"Jock, ye bluidy loonie, mind thae boattles!"

The refugees were Frenchmen. One was a very old man, too old for sea-going, and he seemed weary and disinclined to talk. From Rembault, *Jean Rembault*, *M'sieu's*, *Maitre*, we learnt, of their

hazard. Their vessel was the *Lis de Bretagne*, an old vessel of small quickness; but a stout, mind you! From Iceland, and she was returning to winter quarters. *Au nord*, she started a butt; the water gained, and they were running to the Forth for shelter when she struck. A terrible affaire, *M'sieu's*. Three men were drowned, here Rembault crossed himself, with a muttered "*Le Bon Dieu regard!*" One was son of the old man, *le vieux, Josef*, who was also, we learned, owner of the boat, but, being illiterate, acted as mate. This was their tale, and we did our best for them, but *le vieux, Josef*, paying no attention to our sympathies, sat still on the hatch-coaming, with his head in his hands. For him, the world held nothing more. His ship was gone, and his tall son was the sport of the waters that surged over the grim North Carr.

As the day wore on the wind shifted to the south and the seas came tumbling into the anchorage—rough, confused seas, revelling in the spot from which they had been so long withheld. The Isle of May no longer offered a bulwark to the breeze, so we weighed anchor and put to sea.

XVIII

FINDLAY'S SOUTH PACIFIC

SAILOR folks have no time for other than the 'tit-bits' in reading matter. Such leisure as they have at sea is ruled off into so many little tabloids of time, each definite of purpose, and he would be a rash man who would encroach on the precious sleeping hours of the 'watch below,' however interesting a book might be. Novels have no standing in a fo'c'sle where nine men out of ten can spin a better and more readily appreciated yarn, and works of sober interest are put aside as matters beyond the understanding. About the docks, there are few bookshops. Nautical works and text-books are sold at the opticians', the daily papers and sixpenny editions may be had at a near tobacconist's and sweet-shop. For other literature there is no great demand, certainly not enough to keep a bookseller in a reasonable state of trade.

There are, however, numberless odd shops where second-hand goods of every description are on sale.

Be it Bute Road or The Marsh, Paradise Street or the Broomielaw, the shops are the same, identical in arrangement and effect. Outwith the door the bundles of oilskin clothing and army boots, travelling trunks, and tiers of sailors' bedding stand ready to the hand, and the shop windows are carefully arranged in hopeless disorder, a sure attraction for a seaman's roving eye. Wedged among such items as 'knuckle-dusters,' melodeons, meerscham pipes, and solid alberts are generally to be found a few derelict volumes, the flotsam of the book market, that, appropriately enough, finds its way to the water's edge. Tables of tides long since ebbcd into the womb of time, signal books of discarded codes, sailing directions for far waters, old charts, stained by sea and service, books of cunning seamanship, of the high art of Navigation (with table of distanccf in fea leaguef).

From such a collection of odd publications I once purchased (for a shilling and twopence) a *Findlay's South Pacific*. It was an old and obsolete edition, the one in which mariners are strongly advised to give Banuloa a wide berth on account of the treacherous and cannibalistic practices of its inhabitants. (Banuloa, where now the natives wear Paris hats and London fashions, and say "pip-pip" or "it's up ter yew," in the approved American way !)

The book was in fairly good condition, save that

the cockroaches had eaten most of the binding, and the covers had been used to stand medicine bottles on. Only the chapters devoted to Cape Horn, the West Coast, and the passage to Californian ports showed signs of having been frequently consulted ; its whilom owner must have been in the 'Frisco trade. Just where Findlay tells of the fury of Cape Horn gales, was the mark of the coffee cup—some hurried sup in the lulling of a gale—and further on, where he gives directions for working through the Straits of Lemaire, were marks of sea-water—the drippings of the old man's sou'-wester when he came below anxious-eyed, for another look at the description of Cape Success and the Ship Rocks—to make doubly sure.

Between the leaves I found a scrap of paper, an untidy half-sheet with a few jottings of laborious caligraphy and misspelt words—an account of 'slops' supplied. The 'slops' were clothes and sea outfits that the captains of sailing vessels took to sea and held for sale to such members of the crew as had 'come to sea same's they wos a-goin' t' church,' and had found their wardrobe inadequate for facing the weather. Often the 'slops' were of indifferent quality, and being sold to the crew at famous 'sea prices,' they represented a considerable source of revenue to the old-time shipmaster. For one thing, he had no bad debts to consider, his

customers being under his immediate eye : he had no competition to fear—it is some little distance from sixty, South, to the East India Dock Road. The 'slop chest' was a needed institution in the long-voyage sailing ship, where so many of the crew were shipped in a state of drink and destitution. It met their wants—at 'sea price' ! 'Sea price' was written large over this untidy scrap of paper that I found in the old book.

'To J. Jons A.B., one suit olskins, £1.' I could fancy J. Jones standing, cap in hand and ill at ease, in the cabin doorway, and the steward sorting out the gleaming yellow oilskins, while the old man, fingering and nodding approval, remarks them the best lot he had ever carried. And when J. Jones, with an awkward tug at his forelock, had retired with his purchase, how the old man would enter it up, chuckling at the thought of the nine shillings and sevenpence he had made over the deal.

'To Abram Willis, one belt and sheth knife, 4s.' Four shillings ! And the best Green River knife and belt in 'sailortown' to be had at two and three ! *'J. Christiansen, A.B., one pund tobacco, 3s.'* That would be a purser's pound—fourteen ounces ! Those were a few of the items noted down and thus left amiss, but assuredly they would not be overlooked in the reckoning. Written in the same large hand they would figure as

'to slops supplied' in some bygone account of wages.

Their writer will be retired from the sea now, if he is still alive. In some quiet parish within hail of the sea he will have his dwelling, with perhaps a seamanlike flagstaff in the garden and a pair of brass carronades flanking the doorway. Bored with a longshore life, he will be rather a trial to his womenfolk. Perhaps, when he meets with other old sea captains, he will brighten up, and will talk in a prideful voice of the gales he weathered, passages he made, and freights he earned, maybe, with a half laugh, of the profits of 'slop chest.' No doubt the memory of J. Jones, Abram Willis, and Christensen, A.B., and the amount of their purchases will have faded from his memory, but of this I am sure, that when the wind rises and howls a whole gale into the village street, when, afar, he hears the crash of running seas on the water front, when the land about is shrouded in a pall of driving sleet, he will think of the long stormy days of beating west round the Horn. Perhaps, by some quaint turn of memory, a trifling incident may occur to him—a recollection of the time when the water, running from his rain-sodden sou'wester, went drip, drip, drip on to the fifty-eighth page of *Findlay's South Pacific*.

XIX

THE 'BOOTLE BULL'

WHEN fog hangs thick over the Mersey and the keenest eyes are powerless to pierce the clammy veil, only by sound and a ready knowledge of its import can the pilot navigate the busy waterway. Sight, the seaman's master-sense, denied him, ear must do the work of eye, and the river sounds, distinctive and deliberate, are there to guide as he feels a cautious way to safe anchorage. A quick, alarmed clatter of a ship's bell marks a vessel anchored; followed by the *room, room* of a brazen gong, it notes a lengthy craft. The weak, futile rasp of a hand-horn tells of a sailing-boat under weigh, or of a bargeman, adrift on the river, tootling for his steam escort to take his lines. Then the bell-buoys, tolling a doleful note of shoal and sandbank, and the quick decisive strokes that mark the ferry piers. Over to the west, on the Rock Lighthouse, there sounds a clang of bells at timely intervals—sonorous notes, tenor and bass, that

carry far enough ; but, loud over all the river voices, a deep, raucous bellow from the east marks the lair of the ' Bootle Bull '—officially the North Wall Fog Syren. Hoarse, clamorous, insistent—never could Bull of Bashan have tongued a note like that ! Fading to an unearthly wail, it rasps out a message of warning, and mariners take heed when the ' Bull ' speaks and steer a proper course to keep the fairway.

Far down channel, beyond the Crosby Lightship, we hear the roar of the ' Bull,' and though the weather with us is no more than misty, we know of thick fog in the river, and our hopes of docking on the tide are rudely shaken. At first in wandering patches, later a solid bank, the fog comes down on us, shutting out the lightship lights, the channel buoys, the shore beacons ; it is time to go slow, drifting up with the tide and the leadsman telling the depths in the doleful wail of a practised hand. Now and on, a hail from the look-out brings the pilot's ready hand to the telegraph handle, ears strained to catch the cry, faint and dulled as it is by the inconstant fog wraith.

" Bell soundin' right ahead, sir ! Close to ! "

A sharp movement of the hand, the pointer turns to ' full astern,' and, with screw reversed, we shave narrowly past a boat-shaped buoy, whose bells clang harshly at will of the tide-stream. Then on again, turning water easily, the bows scarce visible

from the bridge. A dank south-easter this, with all the smoke wrack of busy Lancashire to thicken the driving fog.

Loud and sudden, we hear the three hoarse blasts of Crosby Lightship. At last they have set their horn to work. *Brrrr—Brrr—Brrrr.*

"Port a bit! Port th' helm now!" The pilot peers into the murk ahead, to mark the misty glare of the vessel's light. As we glide slowly past, a voice hails us out of the fog.

"The steamer, ah-oy! Ease up . . . ships to an anchor . . . below . . . th' bell-buoy!"

"Aye! Aye! Easy it is!" answering; then, to the steersman, "South b' east, half east, now—an' keen steering!"

Sounding a deep warning note of our syren, we move slowly on—all ears, listening for the next fog signal that will guide us to safer waters. Stifling all lesser notes, the 'Bootle Bull' roars out at half-minute intervals, but we are not yet within his range of guidance; the long stretch of Seaforth Sands lies bare between us. "I doubt we'll not dock on this tide, Captain!" says the pilot, buttoning his oilskin more closely to the throat. "Thick as a hedge, and wet too! There'll be nothing moving in th' river if it's like this! Hark t' th' 'Bull'! 'Gad! A note like that's enough to frighten any man away t' sea!"

"Aye! I think ye'd better anchor, pilot! No weather t' be going on in!"

"An' I will, Captain, as soon as——"

"Ship to an anchor right ahead, sir!"—a loud, startling cry from the bows.

"Slow astern, Mister! . . . Can ye see her?"
—"No! . . . hear the bell . . . more!" . . .
"*Room, room, room, room.*" "'Gad! A big boat, too! . . . Let go th' anchor! Full speed astern!"

Ghostly, in fog and darkness, the towering hull of a great liner looms up near at hand, tier on tier of misty lights about her decks, and the glare of a hastily fired bluelight striking painfully on the eye. The anchor holds—we back away, swinging clear, and, picking up our iron, move slowly ahead, past the 'ocean monarch.' Her anchor bell clatters noisily, some one from the high bridge yells abusive advice through a megaphone, and astern the brazen voice rings out—"Room, room, room, room." We are right among them now. To right, left, ahead, astern, the clang of anchor strokes, beating of gongs, shouts out of the palls, "Ahoy! Ye're too close . . . sheer off! . . . t' th' south'ard, . . ." and a welcome hint from a brother pilot—"No room this side . . . bell-buoy. . . . Clear space t' th' south'ard, I think!"

Hot work! Steering orders, and the engine-room bell clanging out a range of speeds that set the men

below to a chorus of anathema. Only a Mersey pilot could keep a clear head in all the din, and shortly, clear of the press, we are hearkening for the guiding strokes of the bell-buoy.

There, we have it. *Three-pun'-ten! Three-pun'-ten!* Clear and distinct it rings out (as sailor-men say) the wages of the port. Now we are in clearer waters. There is no sound of anything moving in the river, and the Pilot, emboldened by the silence, keeps her moving—creeping cautiously from buoy to buoy, guided now by the hoarse, raucous bellow of the 'Bull.' Nearer we draw, till old 'Iron Throat' thunders his message over our mast-heads, and we swing round to the tide, the anchor cast.

The flood has an hour to run, the weather an hour to clear, if we are to get safely into dock, and anxious eyes are cast about for sign of a lift to the heavy dank curtain that envelops us.

Sure it comes! The luck that has brought us up channel, unseeing and unseen, still holds! The fog lifts, driven to seaward, and we find ourselves (cleverly, if chancily, placed in station for entering) off the Langton Pierheads.

"A-hoy! What—boat's that?" Not Stentor himself could have bettered the dockman's hail! Weakly by comparison, we roar our name.

"Al'right! Coom alongside . . . ye're f'r th'

East Hornby. Hurry oop, now, 'ere th' water goes back ! ”

We swing between the pierheads and enter dock with only minutes to spare, and scarce are moored before the fog comes down again, dense, impenetrable, banked closer by the wandering draught of wind that had set the veil momentarily aside. The ship fast to her quay-berth, we go below, fog-tired and sleepy. Near at hand the 'Bull' roars out his timely signal, and from the river without comes the deep, reverberating syren-blast of a large vessel under weigh. That will be the liner from whose lofty, gold-laced bridge we were told to "take that canal barge out t' th' nar'rard ! " She will be groping for a second anchorage, too late for the tide, and here we lie, snugly berthed behind the 'Bootle Bull,' case-hardened to his bellow and ready for sleep.

Turning the more cosily amid our blankets we murmur, "Well ! good luck to the gilt-edged 'hooker,' anyway. Hope they like it, out there in the river, tooting the great horn, clanging bell, and beating gong, till the day breaks and the tide comes again ! ”

XX

THE 'SHANGHAIED' RUNNERS

AT the south-east corner of the Queen's Dock, where the line of sheds comes to an abrupt end and idle railway trucks make up the view, there is space enough for a short deep-water walk—say, twenty paces and a turn—if one be but careful to avoid the junction crossing stones. It lies without the bounds, concerning which a notice-board informs that—'Smoking in this roadway is strictly prohibited'; is out of the way of straining Clydesdales, laden lorries, and swearing carters; and the shed end forms a fine weather-screen against the chill wind and rain that sweeps up the river. From this point of vantage a good look-out can be kept on harbour doings; no gaffer can pass along to dock or ferry without being seen; and thus it has been for years the 'stand' of the longshore gangs—odd men, who do sailor work on the vessels in dock.

They come there in the early morning, ready for a lucky day's work that begins at six, and till late

in the afternoon groups of weather-beaten men may be seen pacing to and fro, generally in twos, each with a battered oilskin slung over his arm. Many of them are 'riggers' by trade, but of late years that branch of sailing has fallen away. Having had the misfortune to engage in a business that the engineer has since abolished, they are now glad to take any waterside job, from washing paintwork on a Clyde liner to earning a few shillings—'a hauf tide'—at shifting a vessel from her quay-berth. Occasionally some of them go to sea for a spell, but most are anchored to the beach, and, year by year, the same faces surround a bo'sun on the quest for 'hands.' It is a precarious living they make; a day's work, perhaps, between two of idleness. 'Coolie' crews and Chinamen have further reduced their chances of a 'tide's work' on the local vessels, and, since 'strictest economy' is the word on the few sailing-ships that come to the port, sailor work on square rigging is not what it used to be.

Naturally, with time hanging heavy, the long-shoremen are famous 'yarn spinners,' and many curious incidents of Clyde shipping are talked of 'on the stand.' Discussions and arguments (that sometimes call for the attentions of Angus Beaton, the ferry 'polis') go on, and when there is no more to be said of ship affairs, and, for the unnumbered time, the quality of the liquor at the Iona Vaults

has been condemned, the posters on a near hoarding offer subject-matter for debate. Much idle time may be passed in discussing the identity of X. M'Y., a seaman, or Z. M'B., a plate-layer's labourer, who, as set forth in a warning broadsheet, have received two and four months respectively for deserting their wives and children.

A familiar figure among the longshore gang was old Shaw, a genuine journeyman rigger. Summer and winter, bad weather or fine, old 'Wully' took the 'stand' among his mates, working off and on—now a day at bending sail on a Loch Line clipper, or perhaps, if trade was brisk, a week or two in the yards or rigging loft. With 'Wully' it was not always thus. Among his 'min' fine's' were memories of a time when the Clyde quays were lined by lofty ships, of whose stout rigging and spread of canvas he would talk with pride. "Them wis th' times i' th' riggin' tred," he would say; "the riggers did a' the wark in port; no a deep-water man wid lay haun' on rope tull th' 'bluepeter' wis up! Fine times! Six days i' th' week at proper joabs; mastin' an' riggin'. . . . An' as shune's we hud a ship fitted oot, an' th' riggin' set up an' the yairds an' sails aloft, up wid come a new hull frae th' yairds!" Though a 'rigger,' conservative of his 'tred,' 'Wully' had made odd voyages from time to time. 'Runs' they were called, and, being

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profitable, were keenly sought after by the longshore gang.

When a sailing-ship had discharged her inward cargo, she had often to be sent to another port to load. It would not have been profitable for an owner to engage a deep-water crew, and have them hanging on—deserting perhaps—while the vessel's cargo was being loaded. It was cheaper to employ 'runners' to work from port to port, paying them a lump sum for the passage. Most vessels were towed on these short voyages, and beyond unmooring and mooring, washing decks, trimming yards, and perhaps setting a topsail to help the tug-boat when the wind was fair, the 'runners' had an easy job.

On two such voyages I was shipmates with a 'Glesca crood,' among them old 'Wully,' and always when I stopped at the 'stand' to pass a word with the old man it would be—"D'ye min' yon time we wis 'shanghaied,' young f'la-ma-lad?"

"Fine that," the answer; and old Wully, with an "Ecod! YON wis a voyage!" will turn to his mates:

"That wis in th' *Florence* that me an' him wis shipmets . . . yin o' Broon's auld ships. They're a' by wi' noo. Broon's wis aye guid tae th' Clyde chaps. If they had a ship at th' ootports comin' here tae load, they gi'en the 'rinnin'' tae aul' Annan, him that did th' riggin' wark up by. I

use' tae wark wi' Annan—me an' big Bob Gemmell an' Maguire an' th' lang Dutchman an' a wheen ithers—an' when a 'run' wis gaun, we aye got a sicht. Fine joabs, tae! The ships aye towed frae port tae port, an' made quick wark o't. . . . Ye wid be three days or fower at the maist on th' passage, an' efter peyin' yer railway fare, ye hud twa-three poun's in yer pooch when ye cam' back tae th' tred!"

"Ecod! ye're richt, Wully! Then wis times!"—some one fingering the empty bowl of a 'cutty.'

"That time we wis speakin' about . . . the time we wis 'shanghaied,' we went tae Middlesbro' tae bring th' *Florence* roun' tae th' Clyde. We sign't on here, an' thocht it wis the usual towin' joab, but when we got ootside th' Hartlepoons an' th' tops'ls on her—'Le-go th' hawser,' says th' Auld Man—Capt'n Leish . . . ye ken 'm?"

"'Whit?' says we.

"'Let—go—th' hawser,' he sings oot—frae th' poop. 'Come on there, man,' says young Annan (that wis daein' the second mate's joab). 'Come on! Smert wi' it! Let go th' hawser,' ses he.

"'Oh, Criffens,' ses we, 'are ye no' gaun tae tow roun'?"

"'Tow roun' be dam!' ses he. 'Whit? Tow roun' wi' a fine fair win' like this?"

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"Weel! There wis naethin' fur't—orders wis orders—an' we flung aff the tow-rope an' begood th' voyage. Criffens! It wis a voyage, tae!

"She wis in ballast trum; aboot five hunner ton o' pig-airn i' th' hold, an' th' Auld Man widna trust her wi' much sail.

"Cranky ships, anyway—them o' Broon's.

"Aye! Weel, lauds, we hud a fair win' as faur up th' coast's St. Abb's Heid, an' then th' win' went easterly, an' th' Auld Man hauls aff an' oot o' sicht o' th' lan'. Days went by, an' weeks, an' us yins beatin' aboot i' th' North Sea. We had nae claes fur th' voyage—us ettlin' tae be hame behin' a guid-gaun tug-boat afore th' week wis oot. Me, I hud only whit I stood up in! But that wisna the warst o' it! Bein' a coastin' trup th' Auld Man couldna break th' Customs seal an' gie's a bit o' tabacca! When wur twa unce o' thick black that we stertit wi' wis dune . . ye min' that, young f'la . . . us smokin' tawrry rope yarns an' tea-leaves an' coffee groun's! Criffens!

"Aff Fair Isle in th' Orkneys, when we wis aboot a fortnicht oot, a boat cam' aff wi' th' Islesmen wantin' tae swap fush fur a bit tabacca. Losh! They cam' tae the richt ship! We bummed a' the tabacca they had on them! I got twa inches o' black twist fur ma best knife!

"Man, it's a'fu' weather they hae up yonder!

We jist hud gales an' gales—it wis October month—
an' Auld Leish wis that feart tae pit sail on her!
We jist daunert aboot under taps'ls—got a sicht
o' Cape Wrath—an' oot we goes intul th' Atlantic!
Dod! We thocht we'd never see Stobcross again!

“ Three weeks by, him that wis mate o' her cam'
furrit an' tried th' bounce. ‘ Turn to, you men,’ ses
he. ‘ Turn to an' wash paint, an' hiv her decent-
like fur gaun up tae Glesca,’ ses he.

“ ‘ Deil a wash,’ says we. ‘ We sign't fur th'
run,’ we says, ‘ an' ye're gettin' mair nor that oot
o' us! We'll wash deck, an' hand sail, an' steer
th' hooker—but if ye want yer ship redd up,’ says
we, ‘ that'll hae tae be a new contrack! ’

“ He did a bit swearin' an' that, tull big Gemmell
said that he wid gi'e 'm a shoat on th' nose; then
he went aft, an' young Annan come furrit an' tried
his haun' at persuadin'.

“ It wis nae use! We widna dae a haun's turn.
. . . Dod! an' she wis durty! . . . We jist sat on
th' spaur en's an' watched th' young f'la there—him
an' th' ither apprentices—slingin' th' soogy-moogy
an' washin' aff, an' th' mate staunnin' by, glowerin'
at a'!

“ We wunnert whit oor yins wis daein' at hame
wi' nae siller comin' in. Dod! Ther'll be a ‘ pant ’
in Bothwell Street, we thocht. A trail o' wives an'
weans up speirin' whit's cam' ower the man's boat!

"Syne, when we wis twinty-eight days oot frae Middlesbro', we got a bit o' a 'slant'. No much o't. . . . Win' in th' west'ard, an' Auld Leish feart tae run in—an' there wis we dodgin' aboot west o' Skerryvore. We hud a bit o' a 'confab' in th' fo'c's'le, an' then goes aft tae see th' Auld Man. 'Captin,' says big Bob, 'ye've a fair win' noo, an' we're a' wantin' tae win hame! If ye'll no' pit the to'gal'ns'ls on her,' ses he, 'we're a' gaun tae hing wur shurts on' th' topmas' riggin',' ses he—'an' see if that winna bring her in!'

"'Whit's a' this?' says Auld Leish, 'whit's this? Mutiny?—b'Goad! Div ye daur tae come aft here an' tell me hoo tae sail ma ship?' ses he.

"'Aye, that,' ses big Bob. 'We're a wheen desp'rate men, Captin,' ses he. 'A' wur wifes an' weans is on th' Pairish by noo, an' there's no' a smoke o' tabacca in th' bloody ship!'

"In a fine funk Auld Leish ordert us yins aff th' poop, but it wisna lang afore he gi'en her th' to'gal'ns'ls.

"Aff the 'Hull' th' win' whuppit intae th' nor'-west, an' we cam' hame in fine style. Between Sanna an' th' Pladda Lights yin o' Steel's boats cam' aff t' tow us in. I kent th' skipper o' her—wee Sanny Devlin . . . stops up by in th' Weaver's Pen, on th' same stairheid's ma merrit dochter. As shune's he sees sicht o' us he shouts oot:

'Weelyum Shaw,' ses he. 'Weel-yum Shaw an' Rubbert Gemmell, b'Goad! Man, we thocht ye wis a' droont!'

" 'Aye, that,' ses he. 'We thocht ye wis a' droont, an' th' Prudenshial's stopped callin' fur yer weekly money,' ses he! "

XXI

CHÔTA BURSÂT

THE day had been breathless. The sun, scarce veiled by thin, filmy clouds, had worked his fiery will on us all day. All ironwork about the decks stood painfully hot to the touch. Blistering paint and spurting pitch from the deck seams set up an almost unbearable stench. A quivering vapour had stood, man high, over the open hatchways and lower decks—a dazzling, luminous haze that tried our tired eyes and distorted all objects to fevered images. Added to this was the noise and steam of our working ship. A ceaseless throb of the winches—the round and rattling of falls—hoarse, raucous cries and orders of hatchmen—the hiss and screaming of overworked valves. Oh, we are sick of it all—and glad when six comes and the Bombay Dock siren sounds out for stoppage!

A grateful quiet falls over the ship when the last of the gangs goes ashore, and we seek out a passably cool spot on the upper deck to set out our chairs

and watch the tyrant sun go down. Countless evening fires have made a soft haze over the roofs of the native town, and the sun shows blood-red through it as he goes from sight. Clouds, that before were invisible, come up when the sun has gone and stand in serried banks in the west—piling up and piling up, but never rising beyond a modest altitude.

The usual evening sky for the time of year—a little red, perhaps, but certainly nothing ominous in appearance.

Darkness comes swiftly on the heels of sunset. Lights spring up on the roofs and balconies, showing that even the natives are feeling the heat in their ill-ventilated flats. As the glow in the west dies out of the evening sky, a reflected glare from the city's lighted streets takes its place : now the clouds look dun and sullen, with their lower edges tinted ; small portions are detached and breaking away and sail up into the starlit zenith.

The ebbing stream of dock labour still wanders homeward. A large gang of coal coolies come in from their day's work at a steamer in the harbour. Many are women and small children, and their shrill voices, wrangling and protesting as is their way when work is over, carry far in the still night air. Gharries go wheeling swiftly up the dock roadway bearing those of us whom the breathless day has not daunted to an evening's mild distraction. A long

train from up country comes slowly into the dock lines. The engine snorts in sudden alarming spasms as it drives the laden waggons across the points. A white-robed *peon* walks before the advancing waggons, ringing a hand-bell to warn all the stern fatalists who have laid down to sleep on the railway lines. The train draws up at the sidings and I notice that the open waggons are securely covered by tarpaulin sheets.

"Railway people are taking no risks," said the second. "I shouldn't wonder if it does rain to-night. Hear thunder across the harbour. We haven't had that before, though there's been lightning a plenty. These clouds, too. Banking up for something, I sh'd say."

"Oh, the usual," says I. "We may count on this every night now till the rains break. The cautionary signal was up to-day again. They say the monsoon burst at Colombo yesterday: it will take ten days at least to work up the coast."

"Bhundoo, the *coiree wallah*, told me it would rain to-night. He had it from his astrologer—one of the *pandits* at his temple—and he's laying his grain under cover."

"Wise man. Not that I put any faith in his *pandit*, though. You'll remember the rumours and prophecies that were flying about the bazaar when the King was on his way out. The *pandits* foretold

no end of dire happenings that never came off. Bhundoo's man is working on the 'off chance.' There is always uncertainty in the weather just now, *chôta bursât* is about due. If it rains—well and good. If it doesn't? Well—the gods are displeased because Bhundoo hasn't given enough rupees to the temple funds."

"And yet, with all the uncertainty in the weather, plenty of Bhundoo caste are willing to stand the risk. Look at that big stack of linseed over by the customs *godown*. Must be three or four thousand bags there, and not as much as a rag of canvas over the lot. There'll be terrible mess of it if the rain comes."

"That's so. I suppose the long spell of dry weather, eight months or more, has led to a lot of forgetting. The merchants will be hoping to get that lot shipped before the rains break. Tarpaulins are few and dear just now with the prospect of the monsoon so close."

Now, silence. Six to six leaves an aching of the bones—long chairs have but one use when the day's work is done.

I have no idea of how time has gone, but stir suddenly to find the night air grown chill. The decks below stand glistening against the glow of the gangway lamps. The rain has come. A soft shower, cooling and welcome, has passed over whilst

we slept. It is the forerunner of a heavy downpour, for the banked clouds in the west are rising swiftly, and the once sharp black outline of the sheds and warehouses is grey and misty. Across the roadway, men are hurrying with tarpaulins to cover the big stack of linseed bags: already the wind has risen and their covers are blown about here and there before they can fasten down securely. A stout headman stands by under an umbrella, and he curses and praises alternately and impartially as the men go about the work. Now it is, '*Sabass, maribab*'—and then—'*Hutt, Sooar. Bhun karao ghildi.*' He will be the merchant's man, now come to carry out his master's order of a week ago.

But he might as well save his breath. Before the tarpaulins are quite unrolled, the squall is upon us. It begins with a low hissing that swells quickly to a treble shriek as the wind comes over the house-tops. And rain! Phew—w. A solid sheet—slanting furiously! Away goes the headman's umbrella. Away the covers. A man on the top of the stack bends to the blast, staggers, clutches at the topmost bag, and comes toppling to the ground. The others let rip everything and run to him. He rises spluttering and feeling his bones, looks about for his turban, and makes off, binding his long wet headgear as he runs. Shouting together, the others follow him and make for shelter. The merchant's man stands

under the lee of the bags. For a time he shouts to the men. He makes promises! He implores! He curses! Then, standing out in the wind and rain, he holds his hands up to high heaven and weeps!

Quickly as it came up, the squall passes over. The stars shine out, showing what *chôta bursât* has left to remind us that the great rains are almost due. The hard-baked earth of the day is not easily permeated, and the dock roadway is a solid sheet—a lake—and the water is foaming in cascade over the quay wall into the dock.

Over by the Customs *godown* the men are busy at the big stack of bags. It is light enough to see. The merchant's man has recovered his umbrella and is pointing, pointing. I know what they are doing. They are turning the wet and damaged outer bags to show a dry skin to the casual glance. Come to-morrow, and the merchant is anxious, he will find his linseed securely covered and battened down. Should he lift a corner to satisfy himself, the bags will be dry to the touch.

He will congratulate himself on having come so well out of *chôta bursât*.

XXII

A SAILOR'S VIEW

SAILORMEN often talk of the beauty of the Firth of Clyde, the grandeur of the estuaries of Thames and Mersey, but as yet the Ship Canal as an approach to a port is scarcely mentioned by them except as a big job in engineering, a theme of countless arguments (and sometimes broken heads) in dog-watch parliaments. And this is without reason, for the Canal has beauties that sailors should most appreciate—rich rural scenery and broad stretches of country that could never be seen from the sea. The narrow (sometimes too narrow) channel gives one a near-hand view of the surrounding country, and the doings of farmer folk in the fields are no longer speculative mysteries to the seaman. There is a place at Barton where one could almost throw a handful of ship's biscuit among the hens, and near Eastham (if we were not always in a hurry) we could go bird-nesting with boat-hooks from the height of the main-top.

True, there is not here the stateliness of Highland hills, the breadth and movement of a windy seascape, but the flat plains with the misty, distant hills have a beauty of their own, and one can always keep a purely business eye for bucket dredgers and mud flats, and perhaps find something important to do when Widnes, with its belching chimneys, heaves in sight. Entering at Eastham, the woods and leafy lanes, the gorse-covered banks, the fields and the cattle are a direct call to sailormen to 'swallow the anchor' and come a-farming; and when the rock-cutting is reached, it is with reluctance that you turn to give advice to the tugman, towing a long line of sheering barges, that always meets you at the very narrowest part. After the cutting there are broad fields with cattle in them—fat, red cattle that we talk about when seeing the lean, starved-looking bullocks that draw the carts at Bombay. Trees fade away to the horizon where blue church towers and spires mark the villages beyond. At Ellesmere the huge grain warehouse gives an awkward touch to the landscape, but if the contrast is too much for you, you can always find an interest in the tall sailing-ships lying berthed there, where blue-eyed Scandinavian seamen hook logs out of yawning bow-ports and form them into rafts for their passage through the canals. Here is a network of smaller waterways; locks and steps and bridges

are everywhere, and, away up the hill, the masts of a barge will show you where inland ships go a-sailing, where the chief engineer says 'Gee up, you.' Near the locks is a ship-chandler's shop, with life-buoys and tarpaulins and cans of paint in the little chequered windows: on fine days they hang out oilskins to dry among the fruit trees. There is a fine stretch of country from here to the sluice-gate. In some places, the fields are lower than the level of the Canal, and long-beaked dredger cranes are set up at the sides to pour mud and soil from the canal bottom, and serve a twofold purpose by deepening the fairway and strengthening the banks. Strangely, the dredging plant that would be a blot on a seascape seems here to be quite in keeping with ploughing and sowing and reaping that go on in their seasons in the fields around. The men on the stagings have their trousers tied below the knee, perhaps with wisps of straw: they look like country labourers come strangely to work on salt water.

Now—a shadow on the northern sky; grim Industry in sorriest guise. Widnes! Can anywhere surpass Widnes, as you round the bend? A bleak array of smouldering waste-heaps, with a hundred and more huge chimneys belching forth foul fumes to an ever darkling sky. What a monument to man's power of disfigurement—what a cancer on the fair breast of Mother Earth! Widnes!

Runcorn has a tract of bare ground beside the bridges, and there the children gather to greet us as we pass. Once they used to ask us of our voyage and cargo, but with the spread of education the cry is now—' *Chook oos a banan—ah.*'

Beyond Latchford there are farms, and on quiet spring nights you can hear the cuckoo. Rabbits run about the banks, and they pay more attention to their nibbling than to the East Indiaman surging past. Old roads, over which stage-coaches once rattled, begin and end at the Canal banks: overgrown with weeds and verdure, they look to be no man's land, and the plough turns at their bordering hedgerows. Houses that once flanked important highways now stand in the midst of fields, for the roadways have been diverted to lead up to the giant bridges. As we pass under them, express trains go thundering over our mastheads, and passengers crane their necks out of carriage windows to peer down our funnels and speculate as to our trim and tonnage. Now Partington, the coaling place, with gaunt grimy staithes, rumbling waggons, and squat, ugly vessels moored to the wharves. Even a king's yacht would look monstrous with her top-masts housed and funnels telescoped to fractions. There is no beauty here—no fields, no trees—but a pointing hand on a notice-board shows promise—' *TO THE VILLAGE.*'

Between Irlam and Barton meadows stretch out on both banks, and the kindly weather often throws a wet, blue pall over the factories and their ghostly chimneys beyond. Here is a narrow part of the Canal, and awkward for big ships meeting, and there is a famous churning of foam when the tugs fire up and strain in their efforts to keep their charges apart. The salt water has entirely gone now, and the colour of the wash suggests that the Canal Company have reason when they estimate their water space in acres.

Near Barton Bridge the houses have strips of garden sloping down to the Canal banks. Each has an erection at the low end, where men sit on Saturday afternoons with their jackets off and pipes alight, and criticise the ships. Farther on the scene is that of the outskirts of any great city, with Trafford Park and the golfers to show that even great commercial schools must have their playground. Then on to the docks, where ships carry their anchors over the winning-post and loud-voiced men stow sweet tobacco on the site of a judge's box, for here was the old racecourse that saw many a stirring spurt for the Manchester Cup. That was in the old days, in the early days of the Canal, when the men at the Locks cracked their heaving lines and shouted '*Whoa,*' as their first big steamers came to the berths. Now all that is changed. No

longer the population crowd to the Docks to see that the ships are really there, a brass-buttoned uniform calls for no passing glance. Manchester has become accustomed to her seafarers.

Still, it is interesting to note the change that has come over the Docks district since the ships came inland. What was a ward of working-class houses has turned to be a shipping centre. In nothing is this more clearly seen than in the change of character of the shops. A watchmaker who used to do business in a small way—working into the night with his glass at the eye in the clear window of a dwelling-house—has blossomed forth as a 'chronometer-maker and adjuster': an ironmonger's shop window gives pride of place to palms and needles, marlinspikes and chest-lashings. A small shop, where once a notice intimated a patent mangle kept, now flourishes as an 'American Electric Shipping Laundry' (whatever that may be). 'Shipping supplied' is on every shop window, and 'Sailors' advance notes cashed' needs no looking for among the sea clothes (bed and pillow . . . rs.) and oilskins of the outfitters. Sailcloth may now be purchased in what was formerly a prosperous baby-linen establishment.

Withal, the atmosphere of a sea-connection is somehow unreal. What right has a public park at the very dock gates, on the spot where other seaports

would have slums and stables? Why a cab-stance—with polished taxis in a row, when every one knows that it is only when we steam into the Salvage Court with the right end of the hawser aboard that we can afford such luxuries? Other ports have grown from small beginnings—tideways and anchorage to wharves and quays, and these in turn to docks and warehouses. Here we have a Port of Magnitude, dry docks and quays and basins, cranes and warehouses and workshops, all full-grown and imbued with a spirit of life and work, and all ready to the hand at a turn of the tide cocks at Eastham. It is something great to think of. It is magnificent. Surely the Manchester man has reason for a great pride when he sees the ships coming to their berths, when he hears the bellow of a liner canting on his Highway to the World.

XXIII

THE 'ARTS AFLOAT'

ART at sea is an old, long story : it began with the warm blood of a sacrificial lamb, smeared on the rude sails of early voyagers, rose to a height in the 'greate shippes,' begilded and carven, of the sixteenth century, and now lingering, exists in crude sea pictures, painted on the lid of a sea-chest, in fanciful embellishment of gear and cordage, and in the tattooing borne on the bodies of those who follow the sea. In this lowly form it is but the last shred of a vanishing estate, like the dairymaids' chalking of the milk pans, the carter's bedecking of his horse ; it is a survival of a time when folk took pride in their arts and handcraft, and gloried in the labour of their hands rather than in the hire it brought. Part of this may have been a matter of superstition, a deferring to the gods (as Hindus at Saraswati prostrate themselves and worship the emblems or materials by which they make their bread), but surely that cannot now be so. It could be no

superstition that made Owen Evans (skipper of a 'fly-boat' on the Manchester Canal) have a presentation of Carnarvon Castle painted on the inboard end of his scuttle-butt (paid a sign-painter seven shillings to do it, he told me), for what harm of tempest could befall him, unless his horse were to go lame? And besides, what particular saving virtue could there be in Carnarvon Castle, however well designed? Had it been a 'Mary and the Child,' like the patrone's steering board on a Bastia felucca, or a bejewelled Ikon, like that they carry on the bridge of a Russian battleship, one could have understood, but Carnarvon Castle! It was just that good Evans had an eye for the beautiful, and, to the extent of seven shillings of his scanty means, he was a patron of the arts.

Out at sea we are no longer allowed to decorate our ships; seafaring has become distinctly a business, a traffic, a trade, with no call for unnecessary embellishment. First, the gilt-work on the stern was done away with; it was a needless expense; the cost was better put into timely advertising. Then the shapely figurehead, symbol of grace and elegance, gave place to an iron scroll, an affair of stunted proportions that sate heavy over the sheering forefoot. The carving of a spar end was time wasted, when the carver might be more profitably employed in scaling rusty bulwarks. Then came

the steamship, gaunt and bare of ornament, working through the tides in feverish haste, an ill thing to beautify, a monster of mechanics whose only beauty was that she floated, and, floating, borrowed a grace of movement from the restless sea. In her there is no time to be wasted; her short-voyage crew have no interest in their vessel; she is strictly a machine, to be oiled and greased, and blacked and red-leaded, but not to be embellished—that would be labour lost, energy sadly misdirected. Still in odd ways one sees the mark of more than a hireling interest. Once I saw a collier in Methil Docks; she was black and stark, as only a collier can be; she was piled, bridge-high, at the coamings with slatey Scotch, and the steward was carrying the cabin dinner along in a pocket-handkerchief, but (whisper that her owners may not come to hear) her after ladder-rails were cleverly cross-pointed, and had neat 'turks' heads' at handy intervals. Some one had had a pride in her, for it was surely the work of a watch-below; it was no slap-up job.

In the long-voyage sailing-ship it is different. True, there is neither time nor material for the old-time 'fancy work,' but if the Mate is not too modern in his ideas a little can be done. I have memories of famous bell-lanyards, cunning jobs in half-hitchin', round and square sennit and cock's-combin' that would have been beautifully finished,

a credit to any clipper's poop, but for something always coming in the way ; and bucket handles, and shackles, and boat's fenders, and an albatross's foot that hung long in a dark corner of the aftdeck, which (but for its having been destroyed by a senior in the interests of sanitation) would have made a most artistic tobacco-pouch for any one who smoked shag. That was in small ways ; there is now no carving of skids (' The sea is His, and He made it,' was a favourite motto in ' hard-case,' lime-juice packets), no gilding of head boards, but, if the ship may not be ' fancified,' there are our sea-chests in fo'cas'le or aftdeck, a little rough paint from the ship's stores will not be missed, and we may do as we like with our own.

To sailors there are only two things worth reproducing in colour on one's gear or person. One is a ship under sail, her flags and tackle ; our hands, ' rough and tarred ' as Kipling's chantymen's, are too rude properly to portray the other.

There was always some one in the ship's crowd a famous hand at painting ships, and, as we are an independent folk, many pounds of hard tobacco (the currency at sea) were earned by his talent. Earn it he did, for it was nothing easy to satisfy the many criticisms of his shipmates. Originality in design or treatment was sternly repressed ; there was only one way that a ship should be painted on

the lid of one's sea-chest, 'shipshape an' Bristol fashion.' It was a lee view, all sail set, colours and distinguishing signal flaunting board-like from the gaff, and a lighthouse, the particular one of one's fancy, showing an answering signal in the middle distance. Most preferred the Tuskar, for there was no great mass of land to take up the picture, and, as the ship was nearly always heading to the right, it brought the action down to a definite basis, the pleasure of a seaman's eye, a 'homeward-bounder,' standing up Channel. Devotion to detail was the aim of the painter. Indeed, it had to be, for his patron would be ill-pleased if there was left a matter for sneering shipmates to point to with scorn, to dub 'lubberly.' Even though the ship was stiff and flat, the lighthouse proportionately out of reason, the waves woolly and unreal, the rig and trim had to be beyond question. It was a long job, requiring patience and perseverance. First the price and the character of the ship had to be arranged with the patron. The price was an easy matter, for there was a sort of tariff. A schooner was cheap—two pounds of tobacco, perhaps, and the price rose according to the rig. A four-masted, full-rigged ship would run to about five or six pounds, and, if there was to be a pilot boat in the offing, as high as eight. A pound of tobacco is value for two and six—it is a 'purser's pound,' only fourteen ounces.

Deciding about the ship was a more difficult matter, especially with an old hand who had seen some service afloat. Usually he would decide on the ship with the biggest spread of canvas, or perhaps on one with a peculiarity in her rig.

"Jest you do me th' *City o' Florence*, young feller; wot Ah was in in eighty-four. One o' them ol' City ships, wi' single mizzen tops'l, an' a slidin' gunter fer th' skysail pole. Single mizzen tops'l, mind ye, an' two reef ban's, an' a gaff fer th' trysail on th' main!"

This was the order, and the work began. The wood had to be prepared and a light groundwork put on; then the sky, a grandly blue, homeward-bound sort of sky, laid on. (Clouds were difficult, and were seldom attempted.) Then the ship had to be lined out, and here began the painter's troubles. "Now! Wot did Ah tell ye 'bout that there mizzen tops'l; two reef ban's, Ah said, an' a tackle on th' second cringle. . . . 'Ere, young feller, look at that 'ere light'us flagstaff! 'Ow d'ye expeck a light'us flagstaff t' stand up in a breeze without stays?"

Here the painter, a man of ideas, tries to assert himself. . . . "'Ow could ye see stays 'n a light'us flagstaff, an' it two miles off?"

By this he would rouse the wrath of the fore-cas'le, and there would be a gathering round, and heated argument.

"Never ye mind 'bout two mile off! Ye knows bloody well as a light'us staff is allus well stayed! Jest ye put in them stays, young feller, an' no damn shinnanikin!"

The stays go in. Work goes on smoothly for a bit until some old hand sidles up and says, pleasant-like, "Look a' here, me son, if ye wants things shipshape, jest ye cut out a bit o' th' luff o' that tawps'l!" The patron is indignant; here is some one interfering with his beloved single mizzen tops'l, "with two reef ban's, mind ye." Then, "'Ere! Jest you keep yer adwise till it's arst for. Ah ain't goin' t' 'ave th' lid o' my chest spoiled by them as ain't never bin shipmates w' single mizzen tops'ls!"

There are angry words. Some one else breaks in. "Ho, yes! 'e's a fine 'and at spoilin' th' lid o' yer chest. Why! Look at mine! There was th' *James Baines* as was t' be, an' Ah tol' 'im plain as 'ow she clews up t' th' yard-arm, an' 'ere 'e goes an' clews up t' th' bloody quarter. Rotten bad, Ah call it! An' then 'e goes for to change th' name, an' paints in different colours, an' makes 'er th' bloody *Wanderer* o' St. Johns, a ship Ah never 'ad no use for. 'Im!"—a glance of scorn—"An' calls 'isself a bloody hartist!"

The poor painter has a hard time; it is an all-hands job; even the Dutchman would have a word

to say, and in the general chorus his presumption would pass unheeded by the elder men.

When it was finished and lay in a clean place awaiting a rub of stolen varnish, it was a work of technics, if not of art, and represented more faithfully, perhaps, the cut and rig of a ship of our times than Vandevælde's wonderful shuyts do of his.

In other ways could this desire to decorate be satisfied. 'Shackles' could be made in the 'watch-below,' or (if sufficient canvas could be had) a cover for a sea-chest. Covers were worked of drawn threads, and the fringes were tasselled and interlaced in a mode as delicate and formal as a lady's needle-work. Not many were done, for canvas was almost priceless in a 'wind-jammer,' and there were only a few, Dutchmen and old men-o'-warships, who could do it properly. 'Shackles' were sailor handles for sea-chests. This was a great working of rope and twisting of yarns, a 'test' in sailorising that took a long time to do; he was considered a good seaman who could finish off in the approved manner. (Alas! for the misshapen mass, ends out and uneven, that I spent so many hours over, and finally, after a particularly severe criticism by a greasy Russ, threw into the shakins' cask among the ends and leavings of sailor work.) Shackles were generally painted in three bright colours, hung up to dry in odd corners, forgotten, rediscovered

when bags were being packed and the homeward pilot aboard, and were given to favoured shipmates or were left for 'prentices to quarrel over when they came to clear the fo'c'sle out after the 'crowd' had gone.

Then there was tattooing, an ancient art, beloved of mariners and dukes and princes. It is not now done at sea. Few of the modern seamen know how to do it properly, and it is left to 'professors' of the art to set up premises in Bute Road and Ratcliffe Highway and the Broomielaw and Bond Street, W., where homeward bounders and other men of position can have their sense or sentiments suitably worked on their persons—anchors and clasped hands, hearts and crossed national flags, crosses and memorial stones. ('In memory of mother,' I saw once on the chest of a hard case, as bawling a blasphemous, uncharitable dog as ever Shakespeare knew.) Mottoes were often done. 'True till Death' has a new significance when worked above the presentment of a damsel of rounded charm and muscular; 'Vengeance' on the forearm of a placid Scandinavian was odd; had he been a swart Dago with a long sheath-knife on his hip, yes; but Hans Dans! Decidedly odd.

Once, on a forehatch, I heard an argument about tattooing, a quaint reasoning. "Wot's th' use on it? W'y! If ye gets wrecked out furr'in, an'

goes under, an' gets washed ashore—all broke up—them wot finds ye knows by yer marks" (he meant crosses or a figure of Christ; often done). "They knows as ye're a Christian, an' they buries ye decent. But if ye ain't got no marks, w'y!" (the upturned palms of unanswerable inquiry) "'oo th' 'ell are ye?"

These are the decorative arts. Of music there is less to be said; not that it is of little interest or less importance, rather because it is a more delicate matter to handle. Who, watching men at heavy manual labour, say, hoisting a weight to a height, has not felt a stirring within, a desire to hold the breath while the men pull, an instinct to breathe generously when the pull is given? That instinct is parent to sea-music, to the 'chanties' that seamen sing when straining at the ropes, when heaving, heavy chested, on the bars of a windlass. No one knows aught of the men who set the tunes to the chanties. The words are anybody's, any words may do. Usually they are gross and unprintable, but the tunes are different. They are unchanging, no one dares meddle with them; they are handed down from aged salt, about to hail his Pilot, to wonder-eyed youngsters with the hayseed in their hair. They, too, are unprintable, but that because there is no mode of writing music that could properly express the quick-changing swing, the quaint

indescribable inflection, and the challenging note that comes before a thundering chorus. They are the seaman's own, and will die with him when the sea is only a place for black smoke and whirling screws.

There are some songs, too, sung at sea and seldom elsewhere. Most begin with, 'Come, all ye jolly sailormen, an' listen to my song.' The tunes are very old, almost ancient, and they are usually sung by the older hands. They are 'Bound away to the West'ard,' 'The City o' Baltimore,' and 'Henery Martin.' There is a fine swing about them, but now the blatant influence of the 'alls is in the forecas'le, and they are not much sung. Welsh sailors have a gift: they are great hands at singing in parts. They have a fine sense of harmony, and a man out of tune among a Welsh 'crowd' would be about as happy as a soldier in a Liverpool forecas'le. Their songs are not sailor songs though, and may not be put down as sea-music.

Dutchmen are rare instrumentalists. Never was a Dutchman who couldn't play some humble instrument, but their music is of the '*dans-haus*' order, reminiscent of Shkipper Strasse or a Bier-garten in Altona. Once I was shipmates with a Finn who played the fiddle. He used to play sailor music. He would sit on the forehatch o' nights and play even on without effort. He would make it up as he

went along, a weird, melancholy thing of his own, something about wind and a black night, he would say. His watchmates thought it uncanny, and left him alone. Once a braggart boy cursed him for a screechin' devil. He was called off by the old bosun : " Don't ee go vor tu vex un, me son ; them Finns bain't vair volk ! "

Old Garge thought that if the Finn were vexed he might raise a gale of wind on us by his uncanny fiddling.

That was our music, that and the chanties, never a great art perhaps, but assuredly an expression of deep feeling. Those who have heard know it—those who have heard *Renzo* on a blustering, windy night, and the ship staggering in the track of a gale, or *Shenandoah* borne over the water in the first grey flush of an early dawn.

Poetry has no beginning at sea ; it is a borrowed art, a loan but lightly treasured. Once there went poets to the deep. They told of takings at sea, of the sack of cities, of victories on the main, or of the deeds of the great captains. Few wrote of the life they must have known so well. After all, they could have been but poor poets, since they and their lines are forgotten, while William Falconer (whose hands must have reeked of tar, the palms hardened by grip of shroud and halliard, when he wrote his ' Shipwreck ') stands still a mentor to his sea-fellows.

The lines—

And he who strives the tempest to disarm
Will never first embrail the lee yard-arm,
The master said ; obedient to command,
To raise the tack the ready sailors stand,
Gradual it loosens, while th’ involving clew,
Swelled by the wind, aloft unruffling flew,
The sheet and weather-brace they now stand by ;
The lee clew-garnet and the bunt-lines ply.
Thus all prepared, “ Let go the sheet,” he cries ;
Impetuous round the ringing wheel it flies,
Shivering at first, till, by the blast impell’d,
High o’er the lee yard-arm the canvas swell’d ;
By spilling lines embraced, with brails confined,
It lies at length unshaken by the wind.

—are even now quoted in nautical text-books as a standard in seamanship.

The making of verse is little liked by sailormen, unless it be a new rig to an old chanty or a rhyming lampoon. One who could work into doggerel verse the peculiarities of his shipmates was, in a way, admired, though never popular.

Of another stamp was Mister Richards, who had the next cot in a hospital in Monte Video. He had been mate of a London barque. His ship had sailed, and he was still laid up—a sort of consumption I think it was. He was a great reader. Once he showed me something he himself had written. It was about an old captain of his, who, after a long, hard time at sea, had sent his son to the same service.

One verse was—

The men who kept King Philip's Fleet afar,
The mariners who swept th' Spanish Main,
The men who won the fight at Trafalgar
Lie dead, but in their children live again,
Who, where th' British Ensign flaunts th' breeze,
O'er steam-press'd power, or flowing sail unfurl'd,
Shall hold high court upon the open seas,
And make an Empire of th' Ocean World.

Poor Mister ! He would have no further place in the ordering of that Ocean Empire, for the Sister told us—quietly, that he might not hear—that his was a bad case, that he was not like to go to the sea again.

XXIV

SAILORMEN ON TOUR

I MET them on the cock o' the hill above Whistlefield, just where one can get a famous glint of Loch Long with Glenfinart lying broad and bonny between. I was bound over to Ardentinny and stopped awhile to rest at the summit. It was a fine day in early May. Breezy. Big full-bellied clouds swept over the blue and cast deep shadows on the hill-side.

While I rested I heard voices in angry altercation. The wranglers were far down the glen, but the din of their bicker carried far. Words were not easy to make out, so I concluded that some tinkers were bound up. A turn of the low road brought them to view. There were two. They seemed to be heavily laden and walked haltingly, their heads cast down, as if they were searching the roadside.

As they drew near I made out old William Shaw, sailorman and cunning rigger, of the port of Glasgow. He carried a coil of rope over his shoulder and a large paint-tin in his right hand. I did not know the second man. He looked young. He was slight

in build and walked with a fine turn of the heels that marked him a sailor. He carried a bunch of paint-cans that made clatter as he came up the brae. Some paint-brush handles stood out of his pocket, and his blue dungaree clothes were bespattered with white.

"Hullo, Wully," I said, "I never thought of meeting you stravaiging about the country-side. What's this ploy you're on?"

"Hullo, young f'la-ma-lad—it's you. You an' yer bikesycical. Goad! I wissht I hid yin o' them masel'. I'm ferr din oot wi' a' this trampin'." He threw the coil off his shoulder with an impatient whirl, and sat down on the hill-side. "Hey, you," he shouted to his mate. "Ha'e a look aboot an' see if ye can fin' yer wee gantline block."

"Him," he added with scornful emphasis, "he'd lose the hair aff his heid if it wisnae fur his kep. First it wis the pent an' brushes that he left at th' Bullwood, him that ta'en up wi' th' servant lassies! Then, begoad, he be tae be leavin' Strachur withoot th' sclimbin' irons. Noo it's th' wee gantline block. Fa'en oot on the road atween here an' th' Whistlefield Inn."

"But what's brought you up here with your gantlines and blocks and climbing irons? I never heard tell of a job at the rigging up here on the hill-side."

"Ha'e ye no'," said the old man. "Ah, weel, ye're aye learnin'. If ye had yer een aboot ye, ye'd see that it wis pentin' flegstaffs we wis efter. No' that bad a job, neither"—clinking money in his pocket. "If it wisnae for him an' his wye o' lossin' things, we'd be gaun back tae Glesca the nicht wi' th' best pairt o' fifteen pun' i' wur pooches. We wis ettlin' tae dae a job at Arranteeny an' feenish up an' get ower tae Gourock by seeven o'clock, but afore we wis hauf wy doon th' glen—"Hullo," says he, "whaur's th' wee gantline block?" "Aye, whaur is't?" says I. "Ye hid it when we got aff th' man's cairt at Loch Eck side, afore we begood tae sclimb th' hill." "Weel I huvnae got it noo," says he. "Hits drapped aff on th' road." "Ye'd better drap aff an' find it," says I. "Hoo th' blazes can we dae that bit job at Arranteeny wi' nae gantline block." . . . Sae we jist cam' awa' back up the glen, but deil a glint o' th' block hae we seen."

The little man, after looking about casually, had seated himself and was filling a pipe with black twist. "Ach, whatt's th' matter now, annyway?" he said. "Be me sowl, ye w'd think it was iverry panny in th' wurrl'd ye'd lost, t'hear ye talkin'. Shurre, wit' th' fifteen poun' that y'ure talkin' aboot we can buy a score av gantlin' blocks."

"Hark till 'm. A score o' gantline blocks—an' I'll lay ma share again' a happeny there's no' a

block tae be had at Arranteeny fur love nor money."

"Ach, you an' yerr blocks!" The little man kicked the empty paint-cans viciously, and made off down the glen again.

"Haw, Loughran! Haw, Jeems!—haw, Jeemsy!" In genuine distress, the old man shouted on his hasty mate. "Ach, whit are ye ta'en on that w'y for? Ye ken fine that I'm pit oot at no' gettin' on wi' that job doon-by. Come awa' back here an' ha'e yer smoke."

Wee Loughran hesitated, stood about whistling a while, then returned. I had never known old Wully to be so conciliatory before. Clearly, the little Irishman was the important partner in the concern. I was curious to learn, and asked the old sailor how they carried on the business.

"Ach, it wis jist me seein' wee Loughran therr when he wis sclimbin' a schooner's mast. It wis in the Queen's Dock an' he wis gaun up the pole topmas' jist as nate as if he wis walkin' oot in Sauchieha' Street. Therr wis nae riggin' on her—no' as much as a bit o' chafin' gear tae pit yer fit on—jist yin o' thae wee Dundalk schooners, plain sticks aboon th' taps. Says I, therr's th' wee laud tae pent flagstaffs doon th' watter—a peyin' job—I kent it when I wis young an' soupple masel'. Sae I got on th' crack wi' him, an' took him on at a

pun' a week an' a share o' th' profits. He's an Isley Magee man—a wee bit thrang whiles—but he can gaun up th' side o' a hoose haudin' on by hees eyelids."

Somewhat mollified by old Wully's eulogy, the famous climber had returned to the search. He was peering diligently among the stunted heather at the roadside for his lost gantline block.

"I mak' th' contraks an' mix th' pent an' tend th' gantline while th' wee f'la daes th' pentin' doon. Whiles, if it's a big job,—like auld Captain MacPherson's mast at St. Catherine—I dae a turn aloft masel'. Goad, ye sh'd a seen th' pant we hid ower therr. Ye'll mind o' th' Captain? He wis in thae auld Quebeckers o' Allans. Retired this fifteen year or more. He's gotten a ship's mast rigged up in his gairden. A' complete! Main tap, an' lower yaird, an' shrouds an' lifts an' fit-ropes a' complete! That wis a big contrack. Fower days we wis at th' riggin' an' a day an' a hauf pentin' doon—an' a' th' time th' auld yin wis stottin' aboot bossin' th' job. It wis '*Main tap, therr—ye've left a "holiday" abaft th' kep.*' Or—'*Topmast heid, ahoy. Can ye no' see that shackle is pentit black an' no' mast colour?*' A' th' time he wis merchin' up an' doon wi' his haun's behin' his back, jist as he used tae dae in thae auld Quebeckers. We hid a gey job o' it, wi' a wee dram every nicht when we

cam' doon frae aloft. It feenished up wi' wee Loughran therr forgettin' th' sclimbin' irons, an' us hauf wye ower tae Strachur afore he missed them."

Now I could see the smoke of the *Edinburgh Castle* over the hill and had to mount and away to catch her at Ardentinny. I left Wully and his mate still arguing, though less vehemently, about the wee gantline block.

Perhaps in remote future years some savant will make a sensational statement. He may say that the old folk-songs of his ancestors possess points of truth and actuality in their legendary embellishment! He may quote—

"On the heights of Ben Lomond their galleys may steer."

And he may produce as evidence auld Wully Shaw's wee gantline block discovered on the cock o' the hill above Glenfinart.

XXV

A CHANNEL SUNRISE

OFF Holyhead at daybreak we turn into the George's Channel, steaming south with the last outrunning of the ebb. Broad on the port beam the coast of North Wales looms up, a dark rugged mass against the faint grey of early dawn. Holyhead's town lights glimmer bravely against the dark of the land, and, clear of the Headland, the South Stack light flashes at minute intervals. Ahead lies the open channel, its broad surface scarce ruffled by a light east wind. Here and there twinkling ship-lights stud the darkling western sea-line; astern and to the east a confusion of smoke wrack, lowering over a cluster of steaming lights, shows the outbound tideload from the Mersey on the way to sea. First clear of the pierheads we lead the fleet, but our turn will be short now. Our twelve knots at the very best can show poor heels to the two 'fourteens' who are racing up astern; already the foremost is hauling out west to give us sea-room in passing.

“After all, speed isn’t everything,” we say, looking resolutely ahead. Somewhere in the gloom of the foredeck ‘one bell’ is struck. Half-past four! The lascar on look-out shouts the watch-cry, a long drawn-out *Koob dek-ta hai* that sounds all but wakeful. A gruff, “Aye, aye,” answers the hail, and the Mate, up there, resumes his pacing—*tap, tap, terap!* The madman’s promenade—ten paces and a turn, ten—a halt—a sharp order to the steersman; the gear creaks to a vicious strain, and with our head swinging wildly to sudden helm we sheer under the stern of a schooner, close enough to note a glimmer on her decks—some one striving to prick up an ill-burning sidelight.

At proper course again we speed on; the *tap, tap, terap* resumed. From far down in the bowels of the ship come the noises of the stokehold that tell of action below, in contrast to the quiet of the deserted decks. A shovel clangs harshly on the footplates, an imperative call for more coal to feed the throbbing monster; wrangling voices, protest and abuse, are borne up through the fiddley-gratings, choice wafts of *Bombay-babbery*, that only cease with the clash of furnace doors and the stoker’s warning shout to his mate at the back fires. A burst of green smoke rises straight from the funnel, the measured throb of the engines seems louder to our ears; we should do well now, with

a fresh gang below and the fires cleaned and set away.

Under the great glare of the South Stack a tiny point of light spurting out and in in sharp, vicious flashes shows the Morse signalman at his keyboard, taking tally of the ships that pass by night. On the bow an inward-bound steamer is 'wink-wink-winking' a long message for the dock people at Liverpool, and, south away, an old-fashioned Johnston boat is throwing brilliant fireballs—her Company's night signal. No new-fangled talking-lamps for her stout old captain. He still believes in guns and red and green fireworks—a brave show to catch the eye of a sleepy signalman.

"Vick—E! There's that Booth liner finished now, and old 'fireworks' has got his red flare. Call him up, mister, and give our name!" A new voice on the bridge; two *tap—tap—teraps*. The Captain has come on deck to set his channel course.

"Aye, aye, sir!" Our lamp flicks away at the spelling, gleaming 'longs' and 'shorts' on the bridge spars and upperworks.

"R—D! All right," says the Captain, reading the answering twinkle ashore. "He's got it. Spell 'Thanks' and call off!"

The Stack has just time to acknowledge before our 'next astern' picks him up, and again the 'wink-wink-winking' goes on—something about

the weather in the bay. The Stack will be glad when it comes daylight enough for the flagman to have an innings. It should not now be long delayed ; already the gloom is lightening ; and through a high rift in the misty cloud-bank that palls the east keen steel-blue sky shows the first break.

In the dim half-light the near land, the shadowy sails of drifting coasters, the sheering, smoke-wreathed hulls of the following fleet, take shape and colour. The longshore lights, so late a galaxy of radiant points, are paling to extinction ; the sea, borrowing from the lightening zenith, shows a shimmer of grey, with patches of deep shadow where our side-wave breaks the placid surface. Holyhead breakwater grows sightly to the eye, standing clear of the distant shore. A railway steamer lies berthed within, with a curl of smoke drifting from her two shapely funnels—the Irish mail in readiness. The lighthouse tower standing bold on the summit of the South Stack shows white against a backing of the rugged Head, and when it is light enough the keeper shuts off his displaced thousands of candle-power. Our turn of leadership is up now. In spite of our efforts the first of the ‘fourteens’—a huge China trader—goes forging past, giving us a choking waft of black, sulphurous Welsh in the passing.

Out in the open the breeze comes with the dawn.

A freshening wind rouses the channel to sparkle, and glitter, and play of light and shade. The calm under the lee of the land is swept by rippling eddies ; the sails of the coasters shiver and blow out, then stand full to the favouring land breeze, and the shapely hulls lean away south across Carnarvon Bay. Fast as the light grows the mist breaks up and re-forms in endless fantastic wraiths, all aglow with a tinge of rose that fades through violet hues to deep, stubborn shadows where the clouds overhang. Iridescent plumes of trailing vapour strike out from the dark ridges of the land ; the mist caps of the high Welsh peaks are doffed at coming of the day. The sun's pilot-rays turn the zenith, and flaming scarlet takes the place of rose. Deep azure sky shows through in ever-widening patches, and the night clouds, banking in the west, make a last sullen stand against the vanguard of the morn. Then, in a burst of radiant glory, the sun comes up, clearing the horizon, with scarce a wisp of windy cloud to mar his rising.

XXVI

PORT SAID—AND ‘JOCK FERGUSON’

THE gaunt, iron light-standard, cluster of low huts, mosque dome and minaret, and a ruined, dismantled fort that now mark the site of the once prosperous Damietta have faded away on the quarter, sinking back into the quivering heat haze as they had scarce emerged ; and steaming athwart the muddy outflow of the Nile we draw near Port Said—the Half-Way House ; caravanserai for voyagers on the long sea-route to the East.

A high lighthouse rises up over the turgid water—a sightly guiding mark on the low isthmus where the level desert stands long unseen from seaward. Lesser buildings, gay of gaudy paintwork and fanciful balconies, cluster at its base, and clearing the housetops, the masts, spars, and flags of ships in the harbour stand out. Far stretching east and west the bleak flats of Balah and Menzaleh lie bare to the scorching sun, void of vegetation, unbroken by mound or eminence, save where the rude huts of

the Arabs mark the skyline, distorted by mirage that shimmers on the sandy plain. Clearing to definite proportions as we draw on, the long break-water shows up. Nearly a mile of solid masonry, it stretches its smooth formal blocks out to sea—a windward barrier to the heavy seas that come with northerly gales. At the centre of the sea-wall stands a statue of De Lesseps, a huge massive figure dominating the entrance to the Canal—a statue with the ‘action’ of the polite gentleman at the door of a Polyseum. “Walk this way, sir,” it seems to beckon. “Suez Canal, sir? Straight on, sir, and last turn to the left!”

Off the outer buoy we bring up to take a pilot on board. He comes off to us in fine style, towing in the wake of a powerful Canal tug, but, to our disappointment, the ‘brither Scot’ (for whom *Weekly Mails*, *News*, and *Glasgow Herald*s lie parcelled up, ready at hand) is not our man this time. A lanky Greek boards to take us in; a swarthy Dago, who, though knowing little English, can tell us the news of the day by ‘juggling’ of his hands. Slow, to pass a monster sand-dredger—the latest from the Pudzeoch—we steam into the harbour and lace up to buoys abreast of the Café Khedivial. As we are taking no coal the Port Captain has given us the favoured berth, well within hearing of the Viennese Orchestra, and so near the Boulevard that

a clap of our hands would bring attentive *garçons* to the café doors.

The Port Said 'queer-fellows' in their boats are gathered at the buoys to meet us. Hotel touts, boatmen, pedlars, lace-wallahs, ship-chandlers, coal agents, they swarm about us before our warps are run out—a horde of modern Babylonians, wrangling over places, shouting shrill trade cries, praying custom, patronage, or 'backsheesh' in a hundred clamorous tongues. Our decks, for the nonce, are turned into a market-place: portmanteaux and home-like 'placks' are rapidly emptied, turned upside down, and the wares arranged atop; every standard of ship's furniture is made to serve as booth and showstand—on the hatches, on winch covers, deck chairs, everywhere, a glittering assortment of the thousand useless articles for which a sale seems only to be found at Port Said. On one hand we are offered 'scarabs'—priceless antiques (from Brum-magem); on the other, Maltese lace, some real—most Nottingham. In hushed confidential tones 'Scotch' whisky, at a modest price, is brought to our notice. Ye gods! Bonnie *Shottland brandt!* 'In Hamburg gemacht!'

"Hoo are ye, Mackay," says a voice. "*Auchtermuchty! Ecclefechan, an' Mullguy! Hooch aye!!*"

We turn. Who is this, who dares to parody a Man we Know? Who but 'Ferguson'—'Jock

Ferguson '—' Jock Ferguson, b'lang Greenock,' as he tells us, and again mutters the test formula as proof. No proof is needed. 'Jock,' as an old friend, gets a handshake, and his fellow-pedlars slink away from such a token of bias, and hurry off in search of greenhorns.

"Weel, Jock, hoo's a' wi' ye?"

"Verrry-goot, mister" ('Jock's' r's are wonderful). "How you was yourrr-sel', mister? You want anyt'ing dis time? Turrr-kish d'light, cigarrett. . . . Oh, blenty noose! All mafeesh de Turk! De bloody Sultan got it de sack!" Here 'Jock' spits vehemently, to show a free-born Arab's contempt of Turks and Sultans. "Oh, yes! Blenty trr-uble in Constant. Four, five thous' beoble kill it. Dey got a new Sultan now. . . . No! No monsoon broke yet. Ah wass aboard dat *Paddy Hendisen* boat an' dey tel' me dey had fine weather all de way. T'ree box cigarette, sir? Nine bob, sir, as shair's daith, sir. . . . Oh, well—seven an' six. Ye're a 'hard case,' Mackay. Ah'm givin' you sheap, for you all de time deal wi' 'Jock Ferguson'!"

At Port Said the peculiar circumstance of an unlimited and ever-changing supply of visitors, who stay but an hour or more in the Port, lends itself to boundless rogueries; and the pedlars and shop-keepers—'queer-fellows' all—reap a heavy harvest among the ships, hourly arriving or departing on

oversea voyages. Passengers, after the experience of a week or more on shipboard (where all the buying is done by purser's account), welcome the novelty of being able to actually spend their money, and do not seem to be greatly concerned at the worthless rubbish that the pedlars offer.

Chief among the 'queer-fellows' who ply their nimble tongues at such a market, 'Jock' became early alive to the unsuitableness of his patronymic—Mahommed Dessoukeh, no less—to purposes of his sort of trade. Like as not, he has never heard of Mark Twain and the real original 'Jock,' but, from wherever he got his *alias*, 'Jock Ferguson, b'long Greenock,' he became, and great is his profit. Such success as was his induced others to follow his example, and the 'clan' has grown. Arabs, Greeks, Levantines, Jews, Copts, have all taken the whim, and now John Fergusons, Joe Fergusons, Macleans, Macnabs, and Mackays are met at every turn, each with a sorry goose to cook; and the visitors are asked, in every tongue in Europe, to step up and provide the stuffing. To 'Jock's' broad shoulders it may be due that his particular *alias* is not yet assumed by any other. Some poaching there may be on his preserve—the custom of officers and engineers on the regular liners,—but his business is pretty safe, as nearly every one counts a purchase cheap, if only to hearken to the quaint jargon that

goes freely with 'Jock's' wares. A specious rogue—none more plausible—'Jock' but follows the custom of the East, the system of trading that brings the element of chance—beloved of Asiatics—to the making of a bargain. At Port Said the value of any commodity is just exactly what can be got for it—good reasoning—and if one is only properly scornful at a request for, say, six shillings for a box of cigarettes, 'Jock' or his prototype may come along (when the bell to 'clear ship' is rung) and pocket two bob with a cheery "Thank ye, sir!" Six shillings is 'asking price,' which he demands on the chance of his meeting a 'gull,' and, indeed, it is astonishing how often he hears the wings a-flutter.

'Jock' makes no secret of his trickery; rather he glories in it, and even when the boot is on the other foot, and he finds himself the holder of worthless coin,—the 'queer-fellows' take any currency—it is with no great show of anger that he says, "Done this time, Mackay. 'Jock Ferguson' too bloody good for dam rogue!" After a turn of business on the saloon deck he will come below, chuckling hugely, his broad cheery face a study in elation.

"What now, 'Jock'? Who have ye 'done' this time?" some one will ask.

"Ah done nobody, but Ah done goot 'bizness! Goot 'bizness, mister! 'Fella' up dere, he buy de tobacco. 'How much ye want for tin, dis Pioneer

Bran'?' he say. 'Two bob,' Ah sed, 'an' Ah'm givin' ye sheap,' Ah sed. 'Two bob,' he say. '*Bai—Jove!*' "

'Jock' has the tone of it. "'*Bai—Jove,*' he say. 'Dey sell dat on de ship here for two-an'-six!' 'Dam rogue!' Ah sed. 'Dam rogue if dey sell dat tin for two-an'-six! Ah'm givin' you sheap,' Ah ses. 'Ah wan' dat money for blay de carte.' '*Bai—Jove,*' he say. '*Dese Arab is bahn gambler; blay carte, eh?*' An' den he buy four tin Pioneer Bran'! "

"Well, what about it? Saves sixpence a tin, anyway!"

"Oh, no! He doan'! 'Jock Ferguson' 'a a 'hard case'! Mind, Ah'm tellin' ye! Dem tin Pioneer Bran' wass quarter-poun' tin—de ship sell 'm half-poun' tin, ain't it? Dam fool no look, saavy de tin!"

But it is at barter with a 'brither Scot' that 'Jock' is at his best. No turn of Clydeside 'pleasantry' is lost on him; every new way of putting it is remarked attentively, to be brought forth at the psychological moment when a bargain is to be clinched. His '*Oot ye*'—the two fingers uplifted at the right speed—is worth an extra shilling of any Govan man's money. '*Kam-a-rach-an-chew?*' he will say, tentatively, to a newcomer whose face has been his study for a moment or more. '*Kam-a-rach-an-chew?*' If he is right: business, sure! If wrong: well, if wrong, it is no great matter,

for, be ye of Cumberland or Kamchatka, 'Jock' can ask a fancy price in the mode of speech to which you are most accustomed. True, '*Kam-a-rach-an-chew*' is all he has of the language of Eden, and is not even good Gaelic, but it serves, like '*Auchtermuchty*' and '*Hooch aye!*' and '*Whit div ye think o' Wee Ma'greegor noo?*' as an introductory medium, and that is the great thing among a horde of clamorous petitioners.

With a marvellous memory for men and faces, 'Jock' can place every Captain, Mate, and Engineer in the regular lines that go by the Canal, and he is an accurate registrar of changes and promotions. If we wonder who has the luck to man the new ship that we met in the Gulf of Suez, 'Jock' knows. If doubtful of the whereabouts of a quondam shipmate, it is 'odds on' that 'Jock' can tell us.

"Och aye! Mister Browne? Ah know dat fella'. He come troo' three wik' pas'. *Sheef-off'sur now*—a 'hard case'! Smit'? . . . Smit'? " . . . doubtfully; there are many Smiths. Then his memory serves him. "Och aye," he will say, "Smit'! A wee-fla' . . . walk like dis"—a turn on the deck.—"He leaf de . . . two w'yge gone. No! Ah doan' see 'm come out no more. He owe me fif' shilling—a 'hard case'! But dat's al' right. Bime'by he come troo de Canal, an' he woan' forget 'Jock Ferguson'! *Hooch aye!*"

XXVII

THE STOWAWAY JEW

Two days after we had left Suez he was discovered burrowing in the coal-bunkers—a miserable hunger-maddened wretch, haled roughly to the bridge to be seen of the Captain.

“No spik. No spik,” he whined, in reply to the Chief Engineer’s fierce questioning and threats ;
“Me no spik.”

His clever young anaemic face looked doubly pale in contrast with the sun-tanned seamen about him. High temples and a prominent nose proclaimed the Jew. No sea-fellow this, with his long shapely hands and nervous fingers.

“A Jew—by thunder !” said the Captain, eyeing him sternly (as became a shipmaster about to be robbed of food and passage money). “Where d’ye come from, eh ?”

“No spik. Me no spik,” said the stowaway. Then suddenly he launched into long breathless sentences in high German—with a great moving of

his hands. Wiping the grime and perspiration from a heated brow, the bosun, a stout little North German, left his work at the word to engage the miserable in conversation—quick talk, with many strange hybrid oaths on the bosun's part: then he turned to the waiting Captain. "Zay hees name vass Albrecht. . . . He god no moneys. He gomes here on boardt ven ve vass ad de buoys coalin'—an' he goes to de bunkers in. Zay he vill vork for hees bassage. He zay he blay de pianna, sir. Dot vass hees bizeness."

"The piano, eh? Gad! We've got a prize! Th' piano!" The Captain looked at the grimy wretch as at a new species of mankind; then—to the Chief—"Here, Geordie. Tak' him doon th' stokehold—ye'er short o' hands—and see if he can play th' stoker's chorus with a ten-inch shovel."

Pushed and driven and week-kneed, the unfortunate lad went down the ladder, his taskmaster following. "Ar'll gie ye sumthin' t' eat," he said roughly, "but, b' Goad, ye'll wark f'r it, ma man."

We were in the hottest part of the Red Sea, steaming south at the bare five knots that was all our fainting stokers could raise steam for. A light following breeze but added to the sweltering heat by stifling ventilation and overcoming the cooler head airs that we made by progress. Weak vapoury fumes rising from the funnel told of the state of

things below—bad coal, a weak crew, and a temperature at 103° . Now and then a gasping fireman struggled up from the stokehold to fall all but exhausted on the deck, only to be followed and driven below again by the Chief. There is no limit, no appeal, on a short-handed tramp making the August passage, and the half-fainting wretch, breathing curses to his groans, would turn again to the slavery of fire and shovel.

Stripped to the waist, black, with a reek of sweat pouring to his eyes and scoring cleanly furrows to his narrow puny shoulders, the stowaway clambered to the deck with strength scarcely left to mount the topmost rung. He had had an hour of the hell below, plying pick and shovel under the blows and curses of the brutalised stokehold gang. Groaning from sheer physical pain, he held his hands to his throbbing temples, sank bowed to the knees, and gazed long at the cool quiet depths of water over-side, at the gently rippling sidewash as the steamer moved slowly over the calm sea.

“Whaur’s that chield that plays pianny. Coom oan, wull ye, else ar’ll brak’ iverry boan i’ yer boady.” The Chief, roaring threats, showed his ugly head above the gratings. At sight of him the stowaway started affrightedly, grasping the side rail, with foot upraised as if to climb. From the bridge the Captain noted the action, and saw the agonised

upturned eyes of the Jew. "Here, ca' canny, man. Ca' canny, Geordie, else ye'll have him o'er th' side. . . . Let 'm be, Chief. He's no use t' you, I see. . . . Hi, bosun! Bring that man along here. . . . Here, you! Hi! Oh, my God!" . . . As the bosun, shouting in German, ran along the deck, the Jew, mistaking his purpose, waited no longer. Without word or sound he sprang from the rail, struck water with a dull splash, and the ship moved on. . . . A second splash. . . . The bosun, finishing his run with a leap to the rail, paused to mark the black struggling figure in a swirl of broken water, then plunged to the rescue.

A rush was made to the bridge by the sailormen working on deck, the Captain and Mate shouting orders: some one threw a lifebuoy, the engine pointer was rammed full astern, the helm put down. The boat, as is the way of tramps, was hard bedded in the chocks, and it took time to sway her out, man, and lower her. At last she took the water and shoved off on her errand. There was half a mile to go, for we had swung far to the westward on reversed engine. In the calm sea the men were easily seen—two black specks bobbling slowly in the direction of the painted buoy. To us on deck it seemed but a stroke or two between the men and the buoy; that the bosun was finding it a long

way we could see by the frequent pauses—by the drag of the second head so low in the water. Excitedly, we watched the boat approach them, the rowers urging her with a furious stroke that left a lash of white water behind.

“Right!” A cry of relief from the Chief, while the boat canted to her gunwale with the weight of the two limp figures dragged aboard.

Steaming down, we soon picked up the boat and turned away south again.

The Jew was far gone. He was unconscious when we carried him to a berth on the Chief's settee. The bosun, hard-case hero, was none the worse. In the cool of the evening the Jew came round, and the Chief was soon on the bridge with the news.

“All right, is he?” said the Captain. “Well, that's good. Give him a rest, and when he's better ye can put him to some light work—messroom or that—but no handlin' now, none o' that man-handlin'. Gad! Ye nearly did it that time, Geordie. Man, but ye're a coorse divil!”

“Aye, ar's coorse. An' ar need be if we're t' gat oot o' this hell-hole o' a Red Sea. Hoo farr noo t' Jebel Teer, Captain, . . . t' Jebel Teer an' that fine breeze ye're lookin' for?”

Eight days of the torture we had, then—to open sea, running out the last of the monsoon, the engines throbbing merrily under a full head of steam, and

Geordie, no longer the brutal Chief of the bloody days of the Red Sea, become a man again and hail fellow with Albrecht, the stowaway Jew. At light work—washing paint, sweeping decks, fetch all and carry—Albrecht worked his passage, and more than a waif's share of the Chief's outfit went to clothe him. We got used to him, and almost looked on him as a shipmate before his voyage was up. At Singapore he took the road. No one saw him after the last warp was turned. No one asks questions at Tanjong Pagar.

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A year later I crossed hawse with Albrecht again. It was at Bombay, at the Grand National Bar—a grog-shop in a side street off the Fort, the resort of bluejackets and soldiers, with a stray merchantman or a broken-down English jockey to leaven the crowd. At a piano in a corner of the Bar sat Albrecht. He had on a shiny dress suit, was clean-shaven, and looked prosperous. Evidence of his popularity showed in the array of beer glasses in varying stages of depletion that stood atop of the piano. A bluejacket, at request of 'shipmates all,' rose to sing, and crossed over to the piano to arrange for an accompaniment. As the easier way, he whistled a snatch of a doleful but popular air. Albrecht had learned a little English. "Oh, ya-as," he said, "Ah know dot. *You brik de nose mit*

mudder, aind't it ? ”—striking into a fanciful accompaniment to the sailor's rendering of the ballad, ‘ *You'll break the news to mother.* ’

As his fingers wandered over the keys, I noticed a strip of flesh plaster on the back of his deft right hand. Evidently Albrecht had worked another passage !

XXVIII

THE MERRY ANDREW

DAWN of a grey November morning, a misty wind from the south-east bringing scent of the damp earth and mouldering leaves aboard, as we enter the Manchester Canal, with the *Merry Andrew* steaming valiantly astern. She is an old boat that, the stern tug that took our ropes at Eastham ; an old boat with an old, weather-beaten skipper, who stamps—*tap, tap*—on the crazy bridge deck, a signal to the man below to come ahead with his engines.

A long string of barges towed by a business-like tug-boat is making for the smaller lock, and our pilot, grumbling loudly at their inconvenient manœuvres, decided to 'ease down.' Three blasts of the steam-whistle, which the *Merry Andrew* feebly repeats ; the old skipper stamps with his heel—*tap, tap, tap*,—and with both paddles reversed and a cracking of the stern hawsers the old craft tears up the water and makes the foam fly in a gallant effort

to take the 'way' off our vessel. It takes some power to arrest the momentum of eleven thousand tons, and the *Merry Andrew* does her best; the old skipper seems to be quite proud of her behaviour as we barely clear the sheering barges. One 'blast' from the bridge, and we steam smoothly on past the misty woods and yellow gorse of Eastham, the high banks, and the bleak Mersey flats, where a few shivering sheep are huddling in the sheltered places, too deeply weather-bound to heed the liner surging past. At Ellesmere the small craft moored to the wharves, tighten up their fastenings with a vicious jerk, and seem as if they would like to follow us up the hill to the distant city. As we take the 'ugly curve' at Runcorn the children on their way to school catch sight of us, and loud and gleeful are the shouts from the canal banks. Here is a fine sight before school-time; something stirring to begin the day with. The big liner is interesting, of course, with her crew of grinning 'blackies,' but for them the centre of attraction is the stern tug—their old friend the *Merry Andrew*. What matters that her smoke escapes from apertures undreamt of by her designers, that her thin steam-whistle is wheezing always, that her stem is twisted out of perpendicular and her timbers started at the butts? To them she is the embodiment of maritime grace and elegance, for has she not two tall funnels, while the

big ships have only one ! With gleeful shouts they run along the banks. " *Merry Andr—a*, a-hoy ! Ahoy, the *Merry Andr—a* ! What's thy carg—ah ? " The old skipper waves a hand in acknowledgment, and their cries follow us as we round the bend.

" What's thy cargo ? " shouted the children, a timely question to ask of an old sea-rover, and, by the sea-stained bulwarks and rusty ribs of her, a gallant cargo enough. Of old memories and salt-sea sentiment ; of sad farewells and tear-stained faces at the pierheads as the tall ships crept seaward in her wake ; of sailor shouts and hoarse orders, a rousing sea ' chantey ' as the yards went creaking to the masthead and sails were trimmed for the long board to the south'ard ; a cargo of joyful mariners welcomed back to home waters, of glad shouts at the dock gates when she had dragged the rusty-ribbed wanderer into port.

A cargo to be proud of, though the years have brought the *Merry Andrew* to the lowly duties of a stern drag on the Ship Canal.

The mist is gradually deepening into a fog as we approach Latchford, and our progress is slow and wary. Time and again the *Merry Andrew* has to back away to keep us off the banks, and the dense smoke pouring from her battered funnels tells of the strain on her. We meet an outward-bound steamer at an awkward part. It is a tight fit for

two 'fifty-footers' in the narrow waterway, and there is much churning of foam, cracking of hawsers, and shrill 'tooting' of whistles before we draw apart and proceed on our ways. Bitter cold and all, the pilot mops his heated brow and signals for the *Merry Andrew* to follow on again.

The fog grows denser, and the mournful wail of our syren finds dismal echo as we pass under the dripping bridges. At Rixton a coasting steamer passes us with unseemly haste, taking two of our fenders and the best of our paint down stream with her. This, with the fog and waning daylight, decides our pilot to tie up at Partington for the night. Slowly we make our way to the bank, guided by the rumble of wagons at the coal-tips. In answer to our hail a boat puts off and takes the warps ashore, and amid shouting from the 'bridge' and bank and clatter of straining winches we heave alongside and make securely fast. Some one shouts from forward—"That'll do, the *Merry Andrew*; lie off an' stand by for daylight in the morning!" An answering, "Ay, ay!" from somewhere in the gloom, and at three taps of the old skipper's heel the *Merry Andrew* backs away and vanishes into the mist astern.

Next time we bore up for Eastham the familiar old 'seahorse' was not there to meet us. A stout

and serviceable craft with a brass-bound skipper and the beam of a young Cunarder took our ropes. No one seemed to know quite what had happened to the *Merry Andrew*, but a pier-hand mentioned that he had seen a familiar-looking, black-and-white funnel among some ' scrap ' on the Garston beach last time he was over seeing his wife's sister's 'usband.

XXIX

AN 'ERCTIC VOYAGE

FOR some time I had noticed that old Wully Shaw was missing from the stand. The corner of the Loch Line sheds, where the odd men and riggers stood about waiting for employment, looked somehow less familiar without the weather-beaten face and sturdy figure of the old sailorman. I wondered if at last he had found the race too swift for him. Some years had gone since we were shipmates together, and Wully was then well on in age.

Skelly McNaught, another old shipmate, gave me a courteous wink as I went by one day, so I stopped to ask how things were doing.

Rotten bad, he said. He told me he hadn't done a hand's turn at the 'tred' since the last French barque had come in from New Caledonia—and that was a month bye. As evidence of such hard case he fumbled with his empty pipe. I was touched to see an old shipmate so far down. He brightened. I asked him about old Shaw.

"Ach, Wully," he said. "He's got a fine job, now. I wissht ther was mair o' them. They're diggin' a new dock doon at Bylie Shearer's auld slip, an' Wully his gotten a watchman's job. . . . Sets a' th' gate in a wee hoose an' watches th' tool chests, an' sees that thae wee bandy-leggit Kelvinha' weans disnae steal th' men's denners oot o' ther jaiket pockets. . . . Whiles he's on the nicht shift. . . . Gantin' ower a guid-gaun fire or ha'en a bit crack wi' th' nicht polis'. . . . Ye s'ud gain in an' see th' auld yin if ye're doon that wye. Thae navvies that's diggin' th' dock will no' listen till his yarns. He'll be gled tae hae a crack wi' wiselike folk."

This I promised to do, but many things came in the way, and it was only when a dry-docking job took me down the Pointhouse Road at an unearthly hour of the morning that I remembered old Wully, and looked in at the railway gate as I passed.

There he was, crouching over a fine red fire, the ruddy glare of it lighting up his keen old face, now lined and seamed by the years.

"Ye're therr," was all he said by way of greeting, but it had a Clydeside significance of its own.

I sat down by him on the shiny bench. There was a chill wind from west and the fire was needful. A row of blackened tea cans stood in front of the blaze, warming up for the men who were working by a glare of lights at the water's edge. I had

plenty of time. Across the river I could see the vessel that was to come out of dry dock before we could go in. She was not yet afloat.

We talked awhile of our voyages, of gales and fogs and that. I said something about navigation.

"Man," said Wully, "you fellies think ye ken a' aboot it. As sune's ye get a bit step up th' ledder therr's nae holden ye in. See us a bit o' paper an' a pencil, says you, an' I'll tell ye whar we are. Ye're jist ups wi' yer sextan—an' therr ye hiv it. . . . I min' wanst I made a voyage tae th' west'ard. It wis in th' *Glenbelmar*. She wis a new boat . . . jist up frae Russels at th' Poart—an' we wis gaun oot tae Montreal in ballast. The Captain o' her was one o' ye fancy navigators. Ay workin' awa'—dancin' roun' aboot the compass—squintin' up at th' sun through wee bits o' glesses—dunt, dunt, duntin' wi' th' deep-sea lead every time we cam' within a hunner mile o' land. . . . Whit is't ye ca' that wye o' daein', when ye steer awa' up tae th' Erctic on th' coorse tae America? . . . First ye gang tae th' nor'west . . . then west. Syne, be Goad, ye steer sou'west tae mak' th' land."

"Oh! That will be Great Circle Sailing. The shortest way between two points on the globe."

"Ou aye. Ye've got it a' aff fine. Great Circle, eh! Shortes' way. *Huh!* Shortest way is richt. . . . Weel, we set aff. It wis the summer-time an'

we hid fine weather tae begin wi'. Syne it got cauld an' caulder. Goad! amaist freezin' an' hit July month. The Captain wis ay layin' it aff tae th' Met whit he wis gaun tae do—an' whit he wis no'. He would talk by, th' 'oor about th' time that wis lost at sea through the want o' proper navigation. Hit jis wants thinkin' oot he w'd say. Goad! he wis a warmer. . . . The auld Met was yin o' thae yins that canna keep a job: he took ower mony o' his observations through tumbler bottoms. A guid sailorman though."

A shrill engine-whistle at the gate brought the old man to his feet. He unbolted and threw wide the boards to allow a small bogie engine and a line of trucks to enter. In passing, the engine-driver handed out a billet of wood with a cord becket attached.

"Ye see I'm a bit o' a haun' wi' th' figgers m'sel," said Wully, as he hung the billet up on the wall of his hut. "Them's for tallyin' the loads, a' plain sailin'. . . . Ou, aye, we wis gaun oot ta th' west'ard in th' *Glenbelmar*. Weel—syne, we got in amang th' ice when we wis aboot five days frae th' Tail o' th' Bank. Big humplocks tae. That wis a' richt 's long as it wis clear weather—we could see whit tae dae; but afore lang th' fog cam' doon an' the gem' stertit. It got thicker an' thicker an' us gaun slow an' stoppin'. Th' Captain wis nae

fule, for a' he wis so ta'en up wi' his fancy navigation. Man, he hid th' turn o' haundlin' th' boat, an' he twistet her aboot as if she wis meant tae be sail't that wye. It wis slow, an' stop, an' astern, an' ahead, till th' engineers below wis ferr crazy. When we got intil th' thick o't, we could hear the bergs plunkin' an' crackin' a' aboot us.

"Syne we got oot o' th' ice-field, but th' fog still held on. Day efter day th' Captain wis oot dodgin' wi' his sextan' an' his wee bit gless, but th' fog wis ay too much for him. We wis fourteen days oot when he stopped her. 'Get th' lead over, mister,' says he. 'We maun be somewhere aboot th' Straits o' Bellisle,' says he. We duntet an' duntet till we got aboot eichty fathoms. 'That'll do,' says he. 'We'll wait till it clears.'

"Th' next mornin' it clears up a wee. Awa' ahead o' us, we could see th' land. Therr wis no' much tae go by, hit bein' misty an' a turn o' thin rain, but the Captain hid it that he'd made guid his landfall. Therr wis a break i' th' coast up tae th' norrard. 'Bellisle, fur a fiver,' says he, stottin' up an' doon th' bridge—as pleased as could be."

"A very good landfall, too," I said, rising to go. The tugs at the dry dock were smoking up, getting ready to drag the now floating steamer to her berth. I would have to hurry on.

"Haud on a wee," said Wully, putting a restrain-

ing hand on my arm. "Ye've gotten plenty o' time. They havnae got th' caisoons up yet. I ken that caisoons. Mony's th' time I've waitet t' ma hauns an' feet wis blue at that Number Yin Doak. She'll no' stir oot o' that for hauf an' 'oor yet. Haud on till ye hear th' 'pant.'

"It wis clearin' up fine. We saw a fishin' schooner in under th' land. 'Starboard, you,' says he. I wis at th' wheel. 'We'll go in,' says he to th' Met. 'We'll go in an' ask th' schooner for the bearin' o' Bellisle lighthouse.'

"We drapped doon till th' schooner wis within hail. 'Ahoy!' says the Captain. 'The schooner, ahoy!' says he. 'Can ye give me th' bearin' an' distance t' Bellisle?'

"The man that wis steerin' th' schooner looked up, bewildert like. . . . 'Bellisle,' says he. 'Did yew saáy Bellisle, Captain? . . . Hully smoke! Bellisle's a hunner an' ten mile t' th' south'ard.' "

XXX

A RUN IN

"LEE fore brace, the watch there," shouted the Mate, with a curse at the fickle wind that was bearing us from our course. "Tail on, ye idle hounds. Tail on an' haul."

Quickly the watch mustered at the call, and the yards were hauled forward to a fresh south breeze, a head wind for Liverpool—our port of purpose.

The *Shirley* was homeward bound, twenty-six days out from New York. So far, winds had been fair and strong, and we had made our landfall—Tory Island—as if steered to a hairsbreadth, but now our luck was out. Under shortened sail, the *Shirley* was turned to marking time, sailing tack and tack off the entrance to the North Channel. And to-morrow would be Christmas Eve—the day when we had fondly hoped to be strutting on Liverpool streets with our women-folk, a twelve-months' 'pay day' in our pockets

"What's th' odds, anyway?" said the bosun.
"More days more dollars, ain't it?"

The bosun, being a Nova Scotiaman, could afford to be philosophic, but we, who had dreamed of wives and bairns greeting us on the quay and bearing us home in triumph, looked glumly at great ragged storm-clouds banking in the sou'west.

"Head winds an' half a gale," continued our Job's comforter. "I guess yew byes won't see yewr homes this side o' th' Noo Year. Y' kin make up yewr minds f'r Christmas on salt water agen. Salt horse an' Liverpool pantiles f'r yewr Christmas dinner, I reckon—after all yewr guff 'bout turkeys an' roas' goose an' plum duffs an' that."

"Oh, it ain't so bad 's all that, bosun," said Joe Buttle, who was ever hopeful. "Th' grub ain't half bad, an' mebbe th' ol' man'll give us a tot o' grog f'r a merry Christmas. Mebbe we'll 'ave a fair win' as 'll roll us up t' th' Langton Pier'eads in no time."

"Mebbe. Mebbe thar ain't 'alf a gale o' win' behind them clouds; mebbe this 'ere barque kin go 'ead t' win'; but one thing's sure, ol' hoss: Yew won't get no tot o' grog out o' this ere starvation packet. There's them aft there as kin keep th' cork in th' bloody bottle. My oath!"

With a half-laugh, the bosun turned away to his quarters, leaving us to talk of 'slants' and 'chances.'

The short midwinter day had drawn to a close. Out on the lee bow the Innistrahull Light showed up across the darkling waters. The wind was freshening, and already the *Shirley* was hammering at the short Channel sea, casting icy sprays over the bows. Away in the south we marked steamers' lights crossing the Channel, unhindered by trick of wind or weather. Oh, that we too had a rattling screw at the stern of her to drive us on to our hearts' desire, in spite of the vexing wind! In twos we paced the decks, stamping feet and 'frapping' our arms for a meed of warmth in the bitter weather. The night turned misty, then rain fell, at first in a thin drizzle, but strengthening to a lashing down-pour as the clouds broke away from the misty south. The Channel lights shut out from our view, the horizon narrowed to a near circle of heaving water. It was typical southerly weather, portent of a sore storm battering before we won into port.

Nearly eight bells, the Mate ordered us to 'see all clear for going about,' and, when the other watch joined us on deck—"All hands—'bout ship" was the cry. In a burst of savage rain we manned the braces and swung the great yards when the order came, but there was no cheerful echo of a hauling song as we bore back on the stiff, half-frozen ropes. At the wind again on the other tack (steering back on the line our keel had already ploughed) we were

sent below, and turned into our damp and cheerless bunks with a last sleepy, "Hard lines."

"Ahoy—oi—oi—ahoy! Turn out, you sleepers there! Turn out! Ahoy—oi—oi—ahoy!"

We had been scarce asleep it seemed before our turn was up, and there was John Collins of the other watch, thundering with his fists on the lid of a sea-chest and calling us to turn out. "Ahoy, you sleepers there!" he roared. "Turn out an' see wot th' starboard watch kin do f'r ye! One bell gone—an' th' barque pilin' along afore a fine fair win'!"

'Fair wind.' That did it. At first we thought it a trick to rouse the deadheads—but no. As, half-slept and shivering, we rolled out and put foot to the deck, we knew by the reeling of the hull that it was right—a fine fair wind. "Gad! She's rolling home all right. When did it come, Collins?"

"Oh, soon after you Jonahs went below. 'Ow d'ye expek a fair win' w'en you wos on deck?"

Skiping through the forecastle door in time to escape a flying sea-boot, Collins returned on deck, and we hurriedly buckled on our sodden weather harness and went out to relieve the watch. All hands were in fine spirits, and talking assuredly of a 'home' Christmas. The change had come suddenly and unexpectedly.

"We 'ad no end o' wind an' rain at first," said one of the starbow lines; "rotten cold rain too, sleet a'most, an' then th' win' slips back inter th' west. 'Good iron,' says we, an' now it's blowin' arf a gale from th' nor'west, an' she's smokin' along f'r th' Mersey bar. Keep 'er goin', me sons," he said as he threw off his glistening oilskins and prepared for needed sleep.

'Smoking through it,' she was—reeling along south under a press of canvas. Captain Lewis was great for 'crackin' on ' when a course could be made, and the *Shirley* was staggering with all sail she could carry. Running down the Irish Lights, the wind blowing strong and true, we sailor-folk had little to do but reckon our pay and make plans (that fared no further) as to how we might best spend our money. Dawn of Christmas Eve broke on us as we reeled past the Chickens o' Man, running swiftly before the strong gale from nor'west. Old Man Lewis stepped up and down the poop, rubbing his hands in high good humour, and pausing now and then to admire the set of his to'gallans'l, stiff and straining, each drawing a famous load. At times he would slap the taffrail, shouting aloud—"Into it, old girl. Get into it I tell 'oo."

The surly Chief Mate was in his glory. From first grey break of day he had been at our heels, man-driving for all he was worth. Strangely, we

were keen to do his bidding on this the last day of his hectoring and bullying. At his direction we cleared the anchors for service, and thought little of it when, at our miserly dinner, a burst of green water came spurting into the forecastle through the opened hawse-pipes.

Sixty-four miles from Chickens to the bar, and at a rate of knots we rode down the stormy leagues, and soon the plunging Lightship came into view. A stout little steamer, showing the red and white of pilots on station, came out to meet us, but, though the wind was lessening, the sea ran overhigh for boat service, and the most they could do was to steer ahead of us, showing the way. At this, we had to shorten sail in order to keep a rear position.

Hot-foot from the south'ard a tug-boat bore up to us, seeking a tow, but we had the wind right for the Mersey Channel, and Captain Lewis—canny Welshman—would only promise the tugman a job in the river. Formby Lightship, fretting at her stout cables, was passed before the sea was smooth enough for our guide to lower a boat and send a pilot aboard us.

"Egad, Captain," said the pilot as he clambered aboard, "you're in a hurry for your Christmas pudding, by the pace you're going. You gave us all we could do to keep ahead of you. Are you for dockin' to-night?"

“Iss. Iss, indeed—if they haf got a berth for us in the dock. My owners will be lookin’ for us. They would get my signal from Malin Head.”

Old Lewis, already in his well-creased, longshore clothes, was as eager as the rest of us to set foot ashore.

“All right, Captain. You can get some of the canvas off her now. Tops’ls will be spread enough for bringing up in the river.”

Rounding the last of the Lightships, the Mersey river opened out—a scene of animation that held keenest interest for us. Majestic liners lay anchored off the Stage awaiting their turn to land or embark passengers; coasting steamers backed out of the half-tide docks, turned, and sped away to sea on their errands; huge cargo vessels swung to the ebb outside the dock gates attending the tide; bustling tugs and ferries stood across and up and down the fairway, turning, canting, backing, drawing to the piers and out again, like the scurry of an unsettled brood. Steam everywhere, and belching smoke; not a sailing ship in the river but ourselves; no fine spars to draw a sailor’s eye; no clean-cut clipper stems sheering in this tideway. We had only a short glimpse of the land scenes for which our eyes had longed. Already the sun had gone to the west, and lights were springing up on ship and shore. As we came by New Brighton, the sky

behind was aglow with the promise of a fine Christmas day.

In the river, the wind that had brought us so bravely in fell light, and Old Lewis was forced to accept the services of the tug that had first spoken us. Dearly would he have loved to bring his barque to her anchor under sail—to show the liner's people that there were yet a few seamen afloat,—but the press of river traffic and short berths to anchor in made that a risky manoeuvre. So, steering in the wake of the *Kate Joliffe*, we stemmed the fast-running ebb, and soon our anchor was fast bedded in English ground.

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At midnight, when Liverpool's bells were ringing out the Message, we hove up our anchor and were towed into dock.

"A Merry Christmas, Captain," yelled the Dock-master through his megaphone as we drew on to the pierheads. "A Merry Christmas to ye, and ye're just in time."

XXXI

AT OLD QUAY

AT Old Quay, by Runcorn Bridge, there is mooring space for large vessels overtaken by fog or nightfall in their passage of the Ship Canal. Between Eastham and Latchford there is no other place where they will lie quietly until daylight comes again, and, when the short winter days draw to a close, the pier hands at Old Locks, hearing the hoarse note of a deep-waterman's whistle beyond the bends, lay their heaving lines in readiness and stand by to earn a modest half-crown by running the steamer's hawsers to the mooring posts.

On a chill afternoon in late October, waning daylight and an untimely tide at Eastham send us to this 'lie-by,' and before dark we are well fast to stout iron bollards, the only standards of the section that will hold a weighty ship against the surge and indraft of passing craft. As we come to, the light is fast fading from the western sky. Across the bleak Mersey flats, where screaming gulls circle and

wheel, the town of Widnes—gaunt and grimy in broad of day—has assumed a less forbidding aspect under the last feeble rays of the wintry sun. The harsh rigid outlines of works and factory, the smouldering waste-heaps, the stark unsightly rows of brickwork, are mellowed in prospect by the evening mist, and the great pall of overhanging smoke wrack merges kindly into a grey curtain of advancing night. The arches and high castellated towers of Runcorn Bridge stand warm in colour against the clear northern sky, then deepen to a sombre grey, and that in turn to sharp black silhouettes as the light fades and it is dark.

Lights spring up on the river banks, shimmering, reflected in the stream that moves surely and silently in flood to cover the sandbanks and the water road to Warrington. Out in the river channels the black shadows of sails pass by—barges drifting lazily on the tide, for the wind has fallen away with the sun's setting. Sailing lights mark their progress, faint green flickerings, for such as should show the red, lie anchored or aground awaiting the sluggish tide to lift their laden keels and bear them seaward. Near at hand, in the Canal dockyards and workshops, the clang of busy hammers and rattle of machine tools strike a strenuous note, in contrast with the silence of our deserted quay. Their great working lights cast glare and shadow on the surface

of the water, throwing into vivid relief the fleet of tug-boats and barges that lie awaiting their turn of repair. From down-stream a weedy whistle sounds, and soon the Dublin boat comes slowly by the bends—thumping with her great side paddles and churning the Canal to a white froth and foam. She is a picturesque old Irish ruffian with a fine smell of cattle,—the lowing of a close-packed herd comes from her as she steers cautiously on her night passage to Manchester. Our mooring hawsers creak to a steady strain when the draft comes. We move, a foot or so, till the stout ropes and firm quay fasts hold their own. Old Quay can hold us: we lie still again!

Six! With a suddenness that marks a day's toil thankfully over, the clamour at the dockyards stops. The working flares go out and we hear the clatter of the workmen as homeward, talking noisily, they tramp through the lanes. A low rumble of carts passing over the cobbles marks the last load brought in: gates are swung to with a decisive jar, and the dockyard, so late the scene of vigorous action, stands black and silent. After work—the play. On vacant land by the arches of the bridge a glare of light springs up. There are the 'wakes'—roundabouts and swings, ringboard and shooting galleries—getting ready for an evening's business, and the strident notes of 'A Lassie from Lancashire,' brazenly

orchestral, are borne on the wind to us. The buttresses of the high bridge come to relief in heavy masses of light and shadow as the arcs of the fair spread their glow : jets of white steam spurt from the power engine of the roundabouts—a moment—and the shrill whistle reaches us,—but these notes of ecstasy (space bars to the orchestrion's bellow) are but trial essays at present, for the Runcorn folk will be busy at their evening meal.

It is now half-flood, and a messenger comes clog-clamping over the flags to warn us that he is "lattin' th' water oot o' th' canal." For that we shall have to heave tight our stern fasts and bind her to the Quay. From upstream and down barges and fly-boats assemble, sheering into the Old Lock with shouting and fending and pushing of long poles. The lockmaster herds them into his fold with a fine touch of raillery. "Coom on, there. Coom on," he shouts to a laggard bargeman. "If tha doan't look aout, tha'll be looked (locked) aout."

With a creak of tense chain, the lock gates swing to : the masts of the barges and black funnels of their escorts sink slowly beneath the quay wall, as the lockmaster drains to the level of the fast-deepening river. Anon, the outer gates are opened, and, marshalled by their fussing tug-boats, the barges steer into the river channel and wind, a procession of blinking red lights, under the arches of the bridge.

Others take their places in the locks, entering from the river. The lockmaster sees to it that here is economy of water and power. The inward-bound barges are less in number than the craft just cleared to the river ; there is still space for a flat or two at the low end of the locks. Unheeding the impatient hail of the bargemen, he stands at the lockhead watching the dim sailing lights of a few flats that are beating up against the light breeze now set in from the south-east. Back and across they go, tack and tack, taking the most of the windward running tide. It seems long ere the foremost, with a great rattling of sail and cordage, bears into the gateway and heaves her lines ashore. Now the lock is crowded, with only a foot or two of gleaming water showing, and the master brings the sea-gates across. Again the creak of chain and jarring of the massive timbers, and the boats, lifted by a flood from the higher level, rise to the limit and set out anew on their passages.

High water, and the Mersey at Runcorn a broad river once more ! Barges have come and gone, the Old Lock is quiet again, and the master with a cheery " Good neet, Mister. Six o' clock i' t' marnin'," has *clop-clop-clopped* his way up the long sea-wall. The showman's orchestrion has wheezed out ' A Lassie from Lan-ca-share ' for the last hundredth time and is tarpaulined and at rest. The

wind has come keen from the eastward, with a rare atmosphere and clear northern light that comes with frost. A late express thunders across the bridge, shedding a trail of golden sparks to the water. One by one the house lights go out, but over the water the glare of quenchless furnaces in a Temple of Industry stands steady, reflected in the overhanging cloud-wraith.

XXXII

SUFFRAGE AND BETEL-NUT

MR. NARAYAN S. BHOSLE writes us a letter from which we take the following extracts :

I tell you truly, Mr. Editor, if Suffragists allowed in House of Parliament they make the world topside down. First of all they make Mrs. Pankhurst Viceroy of India and Mrs. Pethick Governor of Bombay. I know you are laughing Mr. Editor because I say this, but all womans is like that and do more foolish things. Your St. Paul is very clever fellow. He knows all the foolish things of the womans. He says very strongly womans must shut the mouth. No talking about business or anything. Everything must ask to the husbands and he will tell you. Shame, shame for womans to talk. But what the womans care for St. Paul. He is poor fellow and not passing M.A. and B.A. like them and their husbands perhaps only passing fourth of fifth standard. So they become proud and fight to go in the House of Parliament. Europe people say we Indian people treating our womans like servant and animals. This is not true. We teach woman to do home work propley. Clean the house, make food, wash dress, make

dress and make jolly all the peoples of the house. . . . Therefore My dear Mr. Editor I fold hands and kiss your feets and ask you to tell all the men to stop this mischief of the suffragists. If man will not stop it God will stop it. I like you very much to put this letter in your *Times of India* because in Bombay also some foolish men allowing womans to do wrong things by which they become afterwards slowly, slowly, suffragists. Then finished with Bombay.

No! It isn't! It is quite genuine and appeared in the *Times of India Weekly* of the 31st July 1912. I have not the honour of Mr. Bhosle's acquaintance-ship, but I know several Indian gentlemen who could quite well have so expressed themselves. There is Mr. Jhimmji, who sometimes does business at the docks. He is a labour contractor and loads ships occasionally—bulk loading, I mean, where the labour is merely that of filling baskets or tubs on the shore and tipping them into the ships' holds. Mr. Jhimmji is not sufficiently a stevedore to be allowed to load and stow cargo. He is elderly, as age goes in India—perhaps forty or forty-five. I hear that he is a grandfather. He comes by the dockside at about ten in the morning, stepping slowly and importantly in his big embroidered shoes. Often I have a word or two with him, for he is a pleasantly benevolent old gentleman, well educated, and has opinions on the topics of the day. Only the other day he expressed himself on the subject

of Abkari licenses, and, had my eye not been taken by his quaint headgear, flowing robes, legs bare to the knees, feet shod in curiously embroidered shoes, I might easily have fancied myself a-listening to a temperance debate at home. Mr. Jhimmji speaks much better English than Mr. Bhosle writes. I have never yet had the temerity to ask Mr. Jhimmji's opinion on the Suffrage question. I had the idea that that was touching too closely on caste matters. Mr. Jhimmji is, I think, a Vaisya, and anything that raises a corner of the purdah is very difficult with them. Still, from my modest acquaintance with him, I feel confident that he would express himself on pretty much the same lines as earnest Mr. Bhosle.

Mr. Jhimmji is wealthy and is said to be very charitable. Conjecture as to the amount of his donations varies among those who know him, but all seem agreed that he gives away a considerable sum in philanthropic effort.

Yesterday, I was passing along the quayside on my business. I saw a steamer of Runciman's being loaded with manganese ore. Bullock carts brought the loads down in small quantities, and the very heavy ore was backed off on to a heap on the quay. From there, it was carried by hand in small iron scoops and loaded into the great tubs that hydraulic cranes hoisted to the ship—and so the ore was tipped into the vessel's holds. The carriers were all women

and girls, and their work was none of the lightest. Each loaded scoop would weigh about forty pounds, and had to be carried a considerable distance. They carried them on their heads, one hand steadying the scoop and the other held straight out in balance. Most were young girls—mere children—and they toiled and sweated under a broiling sun in a rusty choking cloud of ore dust. Some few were adults. At one great heap a woman filled scoops, scraping the red lumps and dry dust with a hook-spade. Slung in a scrap of dingy clothing at her back was a tiny infant, a month old perhaps. Now and again, at the violent movement, the child would wail pitifully. The woman paid but scant attention to it. Perhaps there was a momentary pause in the scraping, to hitch the little scrap of humanity to an easier posture, but the work went on—dig, dig, digging. What industry! Ah,—but there was a spur to industry, and he sat on the rim of an ore tub, and all the time he said things! If the little carrier girls paused but a minute to scratch themselves—to adjust their ore-grimed rags—to see how their naked feet had fared on the rough stones—there was an outburst from the taskmaster on the rim of the ore tub. It is well not to understand Hindustani too well sometimes!

At each heap there was a taskmaster. They

were the only men 'employed' in the gangs, and I noticed that all of them were Mahommedans. Beyond shouting abuse and indecencies at the women they took no part in the loading. Only they sat, each on the rim of an ore tub, chewing betel-nut and squirting the bright red saliva wherever their head happened to be turned at the moment of need; quite a number of the toiling carriers showed stains.

On the way back I met my *mukkudam*. I asked him how they paid the women. He said they were of a low caste—Mahars—and would be getting six annas (sixpence) for a day of ten hours.

I asked who was loading the Runciman boat. He said it was Jhimmji.

XXXIII

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

IN Calcutta towards the end of September the weather takes an unsettled turn, and its vagaries are particularly trying after a lengthy and severe monsoon. The south-west monsoon is officially over, but yet recurs in frequent squalls; the cold weather has not yet arrived, though the morning mists enshroud the maidan and river, and the temperature occasionally falls as low as 70. The sky, fair and cloudy by turns, presents an ever-changing variety of effects, and at this season, above all others, the sunsets on the river attain to grandeur. Rain still falls in spasmodic bursts, and the daily appearance of mysterious cones and drums on the flagstaffs of the Harbour Office indicates the presence of cyclonic areas in the Bay. On the river the slackness and comparative stagnation of the rainy season has given place to strenuous days,—days when berthing masters work double tides, upstream and down river,—when no one may prolong his

siesta, and only foolish folk give bedding to an idle ox. Vessels discharging at the jetties work far into the night, taking advantage of the weather as they may, for who knows when a deluge may befall? Stevedores, breathless and impatient, are seeking in odd corners for the coolie labourers they discarded when 'the rains' set in, and they think themselves ill-used when they find them elsewhere employed. Steamers are daily arriving from outports, and a forest of masts and spars, funnels and shrouds, is springing up at the Esplanade moorings, where the huge cargo-carriers lie, in readiness for a bumper jute crop. Here the river presents a stirring scene, a riot of colour and life and movement. Along the banks gaily dressed crowds of Bengalis assemble to bathe in the sacred river. It is the festival of *Puja*, and the bathing *ghâts* are thronged at all hours by seekers after sanctity. With a thoroughness that marks sincerity, they set about their ablutions and simple rites. Milk, rice, banyan leaves, and scented flowers are cast on the waters; prayers are said, and the suppliants seem utterly unmindful of a shadow on their temple steps, a shadow cast by the stern of an East Coast leviathan, a monument of ugliness. It matters not that strange keels ride in the river, that outpourings from *Feringhi* mills and factories find their way to swell the tide; nothing can defile its purity nor alter its sanctity,

for to them Hugli is *Mother Gunga*, river of ages, healer of pain and sickness, soother of sorrow and suffering, cleanser of sin and defilement, sure highway to Nirvanêh, quiescence of all. The flood comes up from the sea with a majesty of movement, bearing on its broad bosom the craft of many countries and many races, meting an equal surge to shapely liners and the shallow 'dug-out' canoes of river folk. Harbour launches dart about on their errands, panting laboriously against the stream, or steaming with the tide at dangerously high speeds. They lie low in the water, and the waves they cause seem absurdly out of proportion to their bulk and beam; steaming against the tide, they seem to be shoving all Hugli before them to make a passage. Picturesque, ungainly craft work upstream with much shouting and cracking of oars. The standing rowers pull a short dipping stroke, and chant a chorus to the song of their steersmen, perched high above the steering oar. Inland steamers from up-country—high, warehouse-like craft—are canting in mid-stream, or steering, three abreast, towards the navigable passage of the Howrah Bridge. Far down the river, at Garden Reach and beyond, the black smoke pouring from factory chimneys tells of work and overwork, for the jute mills must now toil night and day to stand a chance against the industry of Dundee. A black indigo-tinted squall is making

up in the sou'west, and the lower reaches are shrouded in the blue mist that marks the rain advancing. The steersmen in the river boats lay their umbrellas handy, and the weather-wise put out an additional rope to steady their craft. The flags of the shipping lie limp against the masts, then stir uneasily, as if unable to tell which airt to flaunt. The forerunner of the squall takes them, and they slat out viciously, and lay a trembling edge to the wind and rain. Down comes the deluge, and amid the drumming of the rain on the awnings and the noise of water rushing through the scuppers can be heard the cries and lamentations of boatmen who have been taken unawares with their goods uncovered. There is a scurry and a rush to get the hatches on, and an impatient wrestle with a wind-possessed tarpaulin, and then the drenched *cargo-wallahs* betake themselves to cover.

Out in mid-stream sailing boats are caught by the squall. Some have only a few fluttering rags to tell where their canvas stood; others, better provided, are making most of the following wind, and, with sheets eased away and a full sail, are scudding up-river, to reach Samnugger before nightfall.

Quickly as it comes up, the squall passes away across the city. Sails are again hoisted, and the boatmen resume work. Fishermen put off from

the banks in their frail canoes, and start sweeping the river with their nets, sure of a rich haul after the rain. The flood tide bears strongly upstream, surging under the wharves and landings and washing over the steps of the temples—a brown muddy flood, bearing many derelict objects on its rippling surface. There are brown earthenware chatties, not yet stranded or borne to sea, broken branches and bleached tree roots, logs of timber and rough-hewn spars, carcasses of oxen, and sometimes, a huddled mass that once may have been a man.

Some boatmen recover a baulk of timber and chatter joyfully over their find, but scarce have they got their prize on board before the police boat is alongside, and a burly *Havildar* demands, with an excess of picturesque abuse, an account of the salvage. The headman of the cargo boat endeavours to satisfy the enquiring official, and belittles his find in no halting terms.

“Wood of little goodness, oh, *Havildar-jee*! A cursed bit of jungle wood that I thought teak when I saw it with my eyes. Of no value, no value at all, as thou seest. Accursed am I that I should waste my time at *Maknens* (MacKinnon’s) *ghât*! To the water with it again, M’med Sheik Ismail, for thou knowest whom the *mill-sahibs* will beat if we be late!” The *Havildar* raised a restraining hand, and the log remains. “Oh, son of generation of

Liars, thinks't thou I know not good teak, but days in the water? Show me thy licence, pig, the number of thy boat, for this is an affair for the 'Specter-Sahib' ! ”

“ That I, a boatman of years—— ”

The tide bears the boats upstream and out of earshot, but evidently the matter is amicably arranged. Shortly the police boat casts off, and the log still rests across the gunwale of the *cargo-wallah*. It will be a matter of eight annas or maybe a rupee !

The day wears on, and already the sun's rays seek under roof-tops and chase the grateful shade from under awnings. The Mussulmans in the boats range themselves for prayer, and their cry, *La Allah il a Allah*, mingles curiously with creak of chain and rattle of panting winches. Slowly the sun descends, and a deep bank of western cloud sends out emissaries to attend the close of day. The towers and minarets, domes and spires of the city, and the masts and spars of shipping are outlined with a golden thread ; the distant trees assume a deeper hue. The broad expanse of the river reflects the glow and glory of the sky o'erhead, changing from a molten bronze to the shimmer of fiery copper as the sun nears the horizon. Clouds, unseen before, are creeping up with the eastern twilight, breaking up and reforming under the yet dispelling rays of the light-giver. In the west the cloud banks assume

a grandeur of saffron and gold, orange and crimson, and amid such radiance the sun goes down. From an Indian Marine ship anchored in the river the beautiful melody of 'sunset' bugle-call announces the close of day. Flags flutter from their proud places aloft; the noise and clamour of ships at work, the rattle of falls, the throbbing of winches, cries of the workers and raucous exhortations of men-drivers—all cease, for a time at least.

From the boats thin blue smoke and the odour of wood fires mark the evening meal in preparation, and the boatmen, released from their day's work, gather round and spend the cool twilight hour in talk and banter. One, under the sternports, rattles a 'tum-tum,' and sings, with an affected nasal intonation, an endless song of the glories of '*Shah-Jee-han*.' He details the splendour of the raiment, the magnificence of the palaces of *Shah-Jee-han*, and commences to enumerate the virtues of the wives of the renowned Prince, when an exasperated steward interrupts his chronicle with a vituperative '*Chuperao sooar!*' The glow in the west changes from saffron to a dull smoky red, and then to grey. Familiar stars peep out, ranged in unchangeable constellations. The night clouds roll up from the south-west, and lightning, vivid but noiseless, flashes intermittently around the horizon. Lights spring up along the river on ship and shore, cocoanut oil

flares on the boats, and great ghostly arcs on the railway *ghâts* and Howrah Bridge, their reflections broken by shadowy sail or black hull of passing craft. An inland steamer passes down the river with her searchlight throwing a long brilliant beam ahead, seeking for shoal or obstruction. At the bathing *ghât*, clashing of cymbals, rumble of a rhythmic *tum-tum*, and blaze of many lights and coloured fires mark the ceremonial arrival of some elaborate idol, about to be immersed in the river. Jewels, trinkets, and gaudy fabrics are removed, and the figure cast to the waters. The blaze of light dies out, and only tapers, set afloat, glimmer and splutter in the darkness. At times their feeble rays fall on silent white-robed figures knee-deep in the water; devout ones, engaged in prayer or meditation; and the smell of scented flowers, their offerings, cast on the water, rises in the still air.

The tide has slackened, and they who have business upstream are making most of their opportunity. Creeping along close inshore, where the flood still lingers, they mark their progress with shouts of encouragement, '*Sabass, maribab! Sabass!*'

Then the flood ceases, and there is a stillness over the river, its broad bosom unagitated by wind or tide. The voices of the night take strength from the darkness; the *chirrup* of crickets and cries of night birds can plainly be heard. A fisherman casts

his net with a soothing *plash*, and his oar creaks as he twists his canoe into position for the haul. The low rumble of distant traffic on Howrah Bridge only accentuates the silence of the hour and stillness of the tide. The air grows chill, and a damp mist moves across from the marshy banks at Shalimar. Now a low swelling murmur from the devotees at the *ghât* marks a movement of importance—Mother Gunga, mysterious and majestic, has turned their offerings to the sea.

XXXIV

HIS MAJESTY'S CUSTOMS

REPRESENTATIVE of law and the revenue, the Customs Officers are the first to board an inward-bound vessel. Theirs is the privilege of greeting the sailormen just in from the sea, and although the object of their visit may be opposed to certain proprietary interests, and thus distasteful to some members of the crew, their salutations are none the less hearty on that account. As they are conversant with the doings of the world at large, and more particularly with those of their own port, their coming is looked forward to by the deep-water men, ignorant for months, maybe, of what has happened beyond the rim of their lonely horizon ; and if the mode of greeting takes the form of a proffered newspaper, days old and thumbled as it might be, their reception is almost royal. They are diplomats to a man, these keen-eyed, weather-beaten servants of the Crown ; they never go to work off-hand. That would be an abrupt and mechanical way of

carrying out their instructions. Matters go on much better when amicable relations are established, so our Customs Officer, with a preliminary flourish of his knuckles on the hooked-back door, projects a cheery face into the frame of one's doorway, and says genially, " Well ? " Then, to a comfortable seat and a talk together. There is the voyage to be discussed, the weather, shipping casualties, sailors' wages ; and whilst talking of the appointments of a new ship or of a state of ' Preventive ' inefficiency at other ports, he is, at the same time, taking stock of cabin furniture and marking down some discrepancies in measurement that may be worth looking into. It is all done in fine spirit. It is a game he plays for a livelihood, " You hide and I seek ! " Meeting daily with men arrived from all parts of the globe, he has a fund of interest and incident to draw upon, and, as the pursuit of his calling makes him a keen judge of men and character, he is a good talker, well worth listening to. A favourite theme is, of course, some smart work recently done in seizure of contraband, and the skilful way in which he discounts the element of chance, and presents the particular incident as a standard of everyday work, is remarkable. With the odds so heavily against him, it is not surprising that he should have disappointing experiences, and it is to his credit that he relates the failures as often

as the successes, and laughs as heartily as any one at the way he has been 'done.'

At B—— there was a famous Customs 'crew.' They were known as the 'breakdown gang,' for their skill in the mysteries of ship construction. The magnitude of their 'seizures' was talked about on the seven seas, and they were popularly supposed to have to pay income-tax on their share of the fines for smuggling. There were four whilom ship-carpenters in the gang, and they knew everything about a ship; no task in exposing the 'innards' of a vessel was considered too great for them. They could whip down the lining boards of a cabin, satisfy themselves that the recess contained nothing dutiable, and rattle them up into place again—the while their chief (the P.O., they call him) was having a fairly long smoke in the steward's cabin. Even the ship's sacred compasses were not left free of their attentions, and they thought nothing of probing round the magnet chambers with an iron lantern and a steel poking-rod.

Once a Nova Scotia barque came in light from a Continental port. The 'breakdown gang' were serving the tide, and they boarded her with high hopes of a seizure. The mate of the barque was a 'hard case,' and if looks went for anything he should have had at least half a hundredweight of contraband stowed somewhere away. She was a

difficult job, being an ancient craft, with the repairs and alterations of half a century to puzzle the rummagers, but the credit of the 'breakdown gang' had to be upheld, and they stuck manfully to their task. They went over her thoroughly; they loosed the sails and shouted, "Stand away, under!" but nothing fell from the folds; they shifted ballast and dabbled in the water-tanks, but nothing came to light; and, to crown all, the evil-looking mate borrowed a few cigars and some tobacco from the P.O., "jest t' keep me goin' till I get ashore," he said. Next morning, when going their rounds, they met an ill-used man. He had a bruised lip, was out of breath, and vowing summary vengeance. Ill-used seamen are plentiful enough about the docks, and little attention would have been paid to him but that he was telling a docker something about a Nova Scotia mate, and how hard they were on fo'c'sle hands. 'When shipmates fall out the Customs come by their due'; and a little sympathy elicited the facts that he was one of the crew of the barque, that he had made the voyage, was hard worked, and treated cruel, and now, after a drop o' drink, had had words with the mate, been 'clouted,' and bundled ashore. He muttered many threats against his aggressor, he would be even with him yet—the dog! The 'Customs' were ready listeners, and the P.O. hinted at his own opinion of the mate's

character. At this the ill-used man became suspicious, and when it was suggested that he might know something of the mate's 'plank' (hiding-place) became indignant.

"No! No! Bad's bad, but Ah ain't goin' t' give away no shipmate t' you bloomin' sharks. If Ah meets 'im ashore arter dark, A'll give 'im one, that's wot 'e'll get, one acrost th' bloomin' jaw, but Ah ain't a'goin' t' give 'im away, no bloomin' fear. Me? Not much!"

This was a 'scent,' and when it was represented to the ill-used man that the contraband being found ("and found it will be, if we've got t' stand the barque on 'er 'ead an' shake 'er") he would be fixed on as accessory, he reluctantly laid the information:

"Mind ye, Ah knows nothin' fer certain; but w'en we was in th' river, 'im an' th' bloomin' nigger stooard was a-muckin' about th' chain locker, an' if there ain't 'baccy in that there chain locker, call me a bloomin' Dutchman, that's awl!"

The chain locker is that compartment where the ship's anchor cables are kept, and to clear it for inspection would be no small task, but here was information, the bruised lip stamping it as genuine, so the 'breakdown gang' again boarded the barque and set to work.

They were met at the gangway by the mate. "Hullo! Ain't yew satisfied yet? Ah guess yew

kyant hev much t' dew, when yew come hyar a-roustin' th' rats about ! ”

In spite of his bold front, he seemed ill at ease, and watched their preparations for heaving out the chain with evident perturbation.

“ Wall ! Look yew hyar,” he said. “ If yew start that chain, yew’ll stow it again, every ruddy link, an’ it ain’t no fool job gettin’ th’ range right in a small locker like that ! ”

“ Oh ! That’s all right, mister,” answered the P.O. “ Never you fear, we’ll put the chain back as we get it *if we find no contraband about !* ”

Jackets came off, and they started on the star-board anchor, heaving up, and letting the chain run into the dock. It was hard work ; the windlass was old-fashioned and rusty, but the rummagers hove with a will, and the pawls went *clank, clank, clank*, as if there was a twelve-months’ pay to lift at the windlass bars. Two hundred and forty fathoms of cable there were, but hope was at the ‘ bitter ’ end, and by midday both chains were chock up, and they were able to get down to the floor of the locker. For over an hour they probed around, tramping, ankle-deep, in the mud and refuse of a hundred anchorages. Odd things they found—queer shells from tropical seas, bits of coral, decayed seaweed, scraps of chain and wire—all the refuse that had come up in the wake of the chain

from countless ocean bottoms—but there was no contraband, nothing dutiable.

For long they searched, reluctant to give it up, and that they only did when the mate shouted down, wanting to know what they had found. “Wall! Look a hyar,” he said. “Ah guess yew’d better take a rest, an’ let me get my ‘hands’ on t’ clear that muck out o’ th’ locker—what I’ve been wantin’ t’ dew this three year or more, only never had ‘hands’ t’ spare t’ roust th’ cable up!” Sadly they clambered up the ladders, to find the ill-used man and another waiting in the fo’c’sle with buckets and brooms and a heaving line, all ready for their job of clearing out the locker.

Grinning, the ill-used man said that he’d found that the mate wasn’t a half-bad sort after all, that he had looked over his being drunk and fighting in the ‘Lord Nelson’ last night, and had promised him the bosun’s job on the next voyage!

XXXV

THE CATALOGUE

AT the Stores, an energetic shop-manager pressed a catalogue of their wares upon me. The tome was bulky and I demurred, but it was of no use.

“ Ah,” he said, with a confident smile, “ you will find it very useful, sir, during your stay in India.”

Now, how did he know I was a new-comer? Perhaps there was something in my dress or manner, my topee would be too aggressively new, or my crash jacket would show a tailor’s fold as distinct from a *dhobe’s*! He was evidently an observant person, but not sufficiently observant to deduce that I was leaving Bombay on the morrow—which I was. I did not require a Stores catalogue, but he insisted, so I brought it with me.

It was a very bulky volume, some 1040 pages, and all the items were fully illustrated. The Stores are properly a chemist’s and druggist’s establishment, but the catalogue, beginning at *A—Abaca, roots,*

Manilla—ran through the entire classification of requirements, ancient and modern. *C—Cachous, liquorice*; *D—Diaries, Stores special*; *E—Entrée dishes, plated, best*—and so on to *Z—Zymometers, adjustable, nickel-steel*.

All this I read on my way to visit a man at Colaba. I decided that such a volume was not conducive to a spirit of contentment and economy, that its further perusal would tend to show me how ill-supplied I was with even the necessities of a polite existence. Already I was grieved that I did not possess a *D—Dressing-case, fitted, gold-mounted, warranted—Rs. 780, As. 12*.

I resolved to discard the tempting book, and, to that end, stowed it under the seat of the hackney gharry that was bearing me on. I took pains that the driver should not see me do this. I waited until he was deep in an argument with the driver of an overtaking tramcar. At Greaves' bungalow I paid the gharry off. On my way upstairs I distinctly saw my late driver preparing for a rest. He brought grass fodder from a bag under the gharry and placed it on the ground where his horse, a broken-winded arab, could get at it. Then he lay back on the floor of the carriage, set his feet high up on the wheel guards, unloosed his jacket, and lay still.

But for my having seen this I would still have faith in the Bombay gharry wallah. In spite of

frequent differences on money matters, I had, till this, a tolerant regard for the dusky jehu who bows me so magnificently to my seat—and lets me step off in the mud, he sighing only at the smallness of his backsheesh.

As I say, I saw him at his rest. Judge, then, of my surprise when, half an hour later, Greaves' bearer interrupted our conversation with the information that a gharry wallah had called *back* with a book which the Sahib had left in his gharry.

"Oh! that catalogue," I said. "I don't want it."—Then it occurred to me that this would be a bad precedent.—"Oh, well! Take it, O Bargoo, and let the man go!"

But no! Bargoo returned with the statement that the gharry wallah—so great was his honesty—would return the book to none but the Sahib himself.

There was nothing for it. The man was brought in. He looked hot and hurried, but I noticed that his jacket was still unbuttoned. At sight of me he smiled—a proud, glad smile. He had the wretched book tightly clasped in his hands.

"Thy book, O Sahib, that I, Sheik Ebram, found in *our* gharry."—He twisted the brass badge on his arm so that I could note his number.—"It was a long way off—at Dhobe Talao—before I saw that the Sahib had left it. . . . Here have I hurried back, although there was business for me at Bori

Bundar. . . . I hurried back in haste, lest the Sahib should be gone ! ”

His hurried speech and breathing were well simulated—but that unbuttoned jacket ! Then there was the point that only by lying down in the gharry could he have seen the book as I had placed it. If I had troubled to look over the east verandah, I would surely have seen the gharry in the same spot—the winded crock still struggling with the last straws of his meal. Besides, there is not in Bombay a public gharry horse capable of going from Middle Colaba to Dhobe Talao and back in half an hour.

I knew that he was lying and he knew that I knew—but there was the miserable book, undoubtedly my property—*Hutt* ! I gave him six annas, and the staid Bargoo saw him off the premises, he protesting loudly about the smallness of his reward.

Having thus paid money for the book, I decided to keep it. Greaves was laughing at me, and I swore that nothing should part me from my volume. During what remained of my leave ashore I kept firm hold of it. Even when playing a last hundred up at Greens', I had a wary eye on the spot where I had laid it by. As a result—I lost badly.

Sailing day is busy day. A lengthy boulevard in the nether regions must be paved with the good

intentions that are only brought to mind when the 'blue peter' is run up. Everything and every one is hurried. There is the usual mad rush to complete our loading in time, the doubt whether all the cargo can be stowed, the fitting and finishing of a good burthen, the clearing up and coiling away of harbour gear—sea-trim must be the word when the tide serves.

With all this there are our own personal affairs. The laggard *dhobe* turns up with the washing he should have delivered yesterday. A skilful move this, for now there is no time to turn over and lay bare the tears and rents so cleverly folded to show a laundered surface to the casual eye. Then Aunt Matilda's set of china has not turned up, and there is a prospect of its having been delivered on board some other vessel. A great army of expectant retainers hangs around—most of whom one does not remember having seen before. They salaam grandly whenever they happen to catch the eye, and appeal mutely for backsheesh. At length the feverish rush is over and the stevedore's gangs have gone ashore. The barriers are put up and yellow-turbaned police are there to see that no one without a bill of health is allowed to go on board. The port doctor comes to examine us and to certify that we are suitable for export.

We are all ready, and the dock pilot is clearing

his throat, when a running coolie breaks through the police line and comes swiftly to the gangway. The police wallahs follow and lay rough hands on him :—he is being told a lot of information about the character of his women-folk. It is quite a scene ! The unmooring of the ship is temporarily suspended. I am told that the man has a letter and parcel for me. Observed of all, I open the letter. It is from the barkeeper at Greens' :

SIR—On occasion of last visit you left book which I sending by the special coolie.

The book ! The bloody catalogue again !

P.S.—Please paying coolie hire, annas four.

XXXVI

FLOOD TIDE AND EBB

FROM half-ebb to half-flood there is little doing on the broad of the Mersey river ; only the ferry-boats pass from shore to shore, and a coasting schooner, hung up on the last tide, works slowly to an anchorage in the Sloyne. Traffic afloat is at a standstill until the tide turns and bears a burden of laden ships in from the sea. Out in midstream a few vessels, too late to dock on the flood, are anchored, and a great Cunarder, with her blue peter at the fore, lies waiting off the landing-stage for her appointed sailing hour. To seaward the banks lie bare to sun and wind, and the great grey gulls, the Mersey's scavengers, are screaming and quarrelling over the moist patches ; already the rising water is lapping over the sandy fringes and their feeding ground will soon be covered. Across the river the Cheshire shore lies steeped in the broad light of the westing sun. There is a fresh wind, and the swift-moving clouds cast long lines of shadow on the land and water.

A fine sight. We—the Engineer and I—have been sent round from the Clyde to meet a ship on arrival and are now waiting to join her. We are certainly better here than in the bar parlour of the ‘Admiral Blake’ across the way from the street gates.

A group of tugs lie anchored off the dock entrance waiting for the ships to come in, and the rising smoke from their funnels shows the expectation of the ever-ready. Those inside the dock to serve the outward bound are already casting off their mooring ropes and getting trimmed for their tide’s work. Theirs is the first move in the dock, and soon they will be canting and twisting their charges into the basins. We mount an erection behind some huts to count the blue peters in sight. Bold among the spars of the shipping, the fluttering tokens of departure are easily recognised. . . . “Thirteen . . . fourteen . . . fifteen. Fifteen ships ready for the sea.”

“Av coorse,” says the Engineer . . . “this is a Setterday, th’ great sailing day. It widna dae tae let th’ sailors hae their Sunday i’ port. Nae fears! They maun awa’ aff t’ sea t’ mak’ th’ siller. Mebbe th’ owners—i’ th’ kirk o’ Sunday—’ll pit up a bit prayer f’r Jeck. *Mmh!* Mebbe no.”

Away to seaward, beyond the Crosby, the smoke wrack of incoming steamers is blown low on the

water. It is finely clear, and we watch the vessels rounding the lightships and bearing up the channels. They are the first of the tide load, and being in good time, they come up under low steam and anchor at their ease. A big steamer in light trim has come in from the nor'ard, a ship for the Manchester Canal, for her masts are lowered and men are working at the stagings on her funnel—she must be no more than sixty-eight feet from the water-line to clear the lowest of the bridges that span the ditch. There she goes, thrashing her way up-river to be ready to enter at Eastham on the level. Others are there at the anchorage : Scandinavian timber-ships, listed awkwardly and with deck loads piled high ; ore-carriers for the steel-works ; a fruit-steamer from the West Indies ; the Dublin cattle-boat, broad of beam, with her cargo lowing and bellowing, passes up on the Cheshire side. There is no sign of our ship ; we see no familiar funnel among the incomers. Late.

Life and movement are not only on the river now, for there is a coming and going at the dockhead. Boatmen, pierhands, stevedores, and shore gangs are turning up, looking out for their jobs, and the dock people are shipping levers and unhooking hand chains. Elsewhere in the city there is little work done on a Saturday afternoon, but here, those who serve the tide must come at the call, day or night, Sunday or weekday. Tide is the tyrant master.

The work begins among the small craft. A bustling tug, towing a long line of barges and river craft, sheers into the locks and brings up : bumping and grinding together, the flats in her wake come to the lock walls. The flatmen sway long poles to fend their boats, cast lines one to the other, and shout warnings and hails. In most, the lady of the barge is at the steering while her man tends the lines. Now all are mustered in the locks and the gates are swung to. The water swirls and eddies as it drains to the river, and soon the level is reached. The dockmen hail across the locks, hand levers, and the sea-gates creak and strain in their opening. One behind another the towing lines come a-taut, and the barges pass out into the tide-stream and line out behind their monitor ; black smoke pours from her funnels, and she scurries up-stream favoured by the wind and tide.

Now the big ships are hauling through from the inner docks, and the stir and bustle, shriek of steam-whistles, churning of screw, hoarse orders, rattle of warping capstans, are heard where a short hour before all was as quiet as a country millpond. They are vessels of all sorts and sizes, of all trades and many flags : huge cattle-ships and Western Ocean liners, Levant traders with their decks stowed over with waggon frames and furniture vans, a French barque with her yards canted at all angles, a Spanish

mail-boat for Manilla (her much-bewhiskered Commandant holding his hands to high heaven in protest at the way the Mersey pilot swings his ship to the gates).

The tide waiters are increasing: women are among us now, gazing anxiously seaward, inquiring, listening, watching, soothing fractious children, folding and refolding shawls—each with a big doorway in hand. The tide is hard to them. In the Dock Office there is a constant whirring of telephone bells, and stout elderly gentlemen pass in and out, intent on the ordering of their ships. One emerges gloomily, muttering abuse of wind and weather, and gives orders to his boatmen.

"Aye, aye, sir," says the leader. "Come on, 'Arry. 'T aint no use 'angin' 'bout 'ere. She only passed 'Oly'ead at one, an' she carn't do more 'n nine knots. Coom on, let's be orf. It'll be another o' them —— Sunday mornin' jobs."

The sun has gone and dark is setting in. Lights glimmer along the shore, and the electric arcs at the dockhead splutter noisily in their first contact. The Cunarder passes out to seaward, resplendent in tier upon tier of gleaming ports. She looks like a seaport herself—a seaport suddenly drifted away. The dock gates are now wide, and the outward bound, in timely procession, pass out and stem the flood. To some eyes they may seem to be in hopeless

confusion, a dangerous gathering of moving ships, but there is a method in it all. A loud-voiced dockmaster from behind a huge megaphone controls matters, and the basin is soon clear for the ships to come in.

They are clustered off the dock, marking time till they get the order to come alongside, and show a bewildering jumble of rapidly changing lights, red and green and white. Smartly, as they are called on, but without haste, they drop out of the rush of the tide, one after another, and sheer into the east lockway. Like their sister ships now racing down the channels, they are of all classes, the freight of seven seas brought up on one tide.

It is now nearly high water. A lumbering cattle-boat is breasting her way across from the Wallasey stage where she has discharged her steers, and the dockmaster keeps the gates long open for her entry. With her decks still reeking of the hastily disembarked cattle, she passes through—no time to spare—and the huge gates are swung to behind her, locked to hold the prisoned water till the next high tide.

Our ship has not come in : there is no word of her. There will be fog perhaps, or bad weather in the Bay. We, too, shall have one of these Sunday morning jobs.

There is nothing coming in from the sea now, the

Canal-bound vessels in the Sloyne have all hove up their anchors and are on their way—the river looks lonely after the stir and bustle of tide-time. To seaward are the stern lights of departing vessels and the gleam of the warning lightships. Across the river the myriad lights of the Tower Grounds are reflected, dancing and shimmering in the ebbing water.

THE END

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